



a Pelican Book

# Archaic Egypt

W.B. Emery



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ARCHAIC EGYPT

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Walter Bryan Emery, the Edwards Professor of Egyptology in the University of London, was born in 1903. After preliminary training at the Liverpool University Institute of Archaeology, he went to Egypt for the first time in 1923 as an assistant on the staff of the Egypt Exploration Society's expedition to Tell el Amarna. Since that time, with the exception of six years' service with the British Army during the Second World War and four years in the Diplomatic Service in Cairo, his career was entirely devoted to excavation and discovery in the Nile Valley. Between 1924 and 1928 he directed the Mond Expedition of the University of Liverpool at Luxor and Armant, and in 1929 he was appointed Director of the Archaeological Survey of Nubia of the Egyptian Government Service of Antiquities, with instructions to explore and excavate all ancient sites in Lower Nubia which would be flooded by the second raising of the Aswan Dam. During the course of this work he discovered the tombs of the Late Nubian kings. The completion of the excavation of the fortress at Buhen in 1964 ended his work in Nubia. In 1936, he began the excavation of the Archaic Necropolis at Sakkara, and in 1970 the discovery was announced of a mausoleum of the sacred cows, one of the most important finds in the annals of Egyptology. Professor Emery died in March 1971.



# Archaic Egypt

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WALTER B. EMERY

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## EDITORIAL FOREWORD

NOT long after 3000 B.C. the shadowy outline of predynastic Egypt begins to assume a sharper definition. Then, for the first time, we are confronted by written records of the First and Second Dynasties and can trace in hieroglyphic form the names of Narmer, and of Menes, immortally famed as the founder of a united kingdom. The succession of these kings has been handed down in dynastic lists, some of great antiquity, others of the Hellenistic era, and they span a period of about five hundred years. It is excavation and the science of archaeology that have set the seal on their historical authenticity.

Precisely at this stage the author of this book, Professor W. B. Emery, is privileged to speak, for he himself in the course of two decades has dug out at Sakkara no less than ten tombs which enclosed the relics and remains of kings and a queen of the first two dynasties. The intricate plans of these rich and splendid tombs, which the author has drawn with an exceptional skill, provide a basis also for reconstructing the palatial as well as the domestic architecture of archaic Egypt. And it is intensely interesting to see how remarkably well the written evidence of an archaic document such as the Palermo stone is confirmed not only by the sound tradition of Manetho's history but also by the progressive circumstantial evidence of archaeology. It is true that many problems still have to be solved: we are not even certain which of the kings was in fact the authentic Menes, but the difficulties have been clearly and fairly put by the author.

Now we are about to enter on yet another archaeological era when, as we hope, the evidence of Carbon 14 dating will provide us with a chronological yardstick with which we should be able to define the related development of the archaic kingdoms situated within the Tigris-Euphrates



## EDITORIAL FOREWORD

valleys on the one hand, and the Nile on the other. Professor Emery has shown at what points these very different and far distant kingdoms begin to show signs of a common technological knowledge. Some relationship there was, and indeed we know that under the First and Second Dynasties the Egyptians were trading in the Levant, mining copper in Sinai, travelling to Byblos for timber from Lebanon and Amanus, and to Crete probably for wine and oil.

Perhaps the later chapters are as fascinating as any in the book, with their account of what Egypt had achieved technically before about 2700 B.C., and how far its inhabitants had gone towards shaping the character of Egyptian civilization which stands out as brilliantly individual as any in the ancient world.

It may perhaps astonish many to hear that we may confidently predict that Egyptian soil still conceals beneath it for future diggers as much again as has ever come out of it. At Sakkara itself there is every reason to believe that many important discoveries are yet to be made, and we may conclude by expressing the hope that Professor Emery may one day return there and continue the work which his Egyptian colleagues have so cordially sponsored.

M. E. L. MALLOWAN

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## PREFACE

TO attempt a synthesis of archaic Egypt at this time is perhaps a little premature, for excavations now in progress are revealing new material which may modify, or indeed drastically alter, many things which are at present regarded as beyond dispute. A full description of the civilization of the Nile valley during the first two dynasties would require a volume many times the size of this book, and my readers must understand that they are asked to accept a work which can only be little more than an introduction to a vast subject.

This, then, is an attempt to present a general outline of our knowledge of Egypt at the dawn of its history as a civilized state, to which our modern world, directly and indirectly, owes so much.

I wish to express my gratitude to Professor M. E. L. Mallowan for many valuable suggestions which have resulted in the introduction of several improvements both in the wording of many passages in the text and in the inclusion of several features I had overlooked.

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# INTRODUCTION

## THE DISCOVERY OF THE ARCHAIC PERIOD

BEFORE 1895, our knowledge of Egypt's history did not extend back beyond the reign of the Pharaoh Senefru, first king of the Fourth Dynasty (2680 B.C.), and to the historian of that day even he was a somewhat shadowy figure. It is true that we had the records of the Classical writers giving long lists of kings with what was considered the more important events of their reigns. We also had Egyptian lists of the kings right back to the legendary Menes, the first monarch of the First Dynasty and the founder of united Egypt. But these records, both Classical and Egyptian, were too fragmentary to give the scholar any sure foundation for historical research, and indeed many authorities regarded these kings as largely mythological. Certainly no one had any conception of the highly civilized state which existed in the Nile valley hundreds of years before the Pyramid Age.

All this was changed within a few years by the pick of the excavator. The discoveries of Petrie at Abydos, de Morgan at Nagadeh, and Quibell at Hieraconpolis revealed monuments and objects of these early kings and pushed back the frontiers of human history for more than five hundred years.

But let us examine the historical material available to the Egyptologist before these discoveries were made. The old Egyptian records consist of five king lists. These are:

1. The 'Tablet of Abydos' inscribed on the walls of a corridor of the temple of Seti at Abydos, listing a series of the *nesu*\* names of seventy-six kings from Menes to Seti I.

2. The 'Tablet of Karnak', now in Paris, originally listed the *nesu* names of sixty-two kings from Menes to Thotmose III, but it

\* The *nesu*, or fourth name of the royal titulary, is now read as 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt'. It was taken by the king on his accession to the throne (see page 107).

does not compare with the Abydos list in value, for it was largely based on tradition rather than on formal chronicles.

3. The 'Tablet of Sakkara', found in the tomb of the Royal Scribe Thunery and now in the Cairo Museum, lists the *nesu* names of forty-seven kings beginning with Merbapen (Enezib) and ending with Rameses II. Merbapen was the sixth king of the First Dynasty, and the reason for the omission of his five predecessors was probably because the Sakkara tablet represented the king list according to the records of Lower Egypt, which did not recognize their sovereignty. The Abydos and Karnak lists representing Upper Egypt of course recognized the earlier kings.

4. The Turin Papyrus, written in hieratic, presents a list of kings with the length of each reign in years, months, and days. Unlike the monumental lists of Abydos, Karnak, and Sakkara, it does not stop with unification and the First Dynasty, but goes back beyond mortal kings to the dynasties of the gods. Another difference from the monumental lists is that the papyrus divides the groups of kings into periods. Compiled apparently in the Nineteenth Dynasty, the papyrus was undoubtedly a temple document and it was from such documents that the classical writers compiled their histories.

Valuable as it is, the Turin Papyrus is a tragedy, for more than half its value has been lost by careless treatment. Originally in the possession of the king of Sardinia, it was sent to Turin in a box without packing and it arrived at its destination broken into innumerable fragments. For years, scholars have worked to fit together what remained, but even so, in its restored state, many important gaps occur and the order of some of the kings remains in consequence a matter of debate. Of the seventeen kings of the Archaic Period, only ten are definitely recognizable.

5. Finally we have the so-called Palermo Stone which, like the Turin Papyrus, represents another tragedy for archaeological research. Only five small fragments of a great stone slab, originally about 7 ft long and 2 ft high, are in our hands and no record remains which will give a clue to where these pieces were found. Although the slab has obviously been broken up into small fragments, it is quite possible — even probable — that many more pieces of this invaluable monument remain, if we only knew where to look. As it is, we are faced with the tantalizing knowledge that a record of the



## INTRODUCTION

name of every king of the Archaic Period existed, together with the number of years of his reign and the chief events which occurred during his occupation of the throne. And these records were compiled in the Fifth Dynasty only about 700 years after the Unification, so that the margin of error would in all probability be very small. The slab of black basalt was lightly inscribed with the annals of the first five dynasties and also the names of the kings of Upper and Lower Egypt who ruled the two separate kingdoms before the Unification. The largest fragment has for many years been part of the collection in the Museum at Palermo, hence its name; a second piece is kept in the Cairo Museum, while a very small fragment is preserved in the Petrie Collection at University College London. Much research has been devoted to this important monument, but the conclusions arrived at by various authorities are conflicting and no entirely satisfactory reconstruction even of its general design has been achieved. However, one fact appears fairly certain: the second and third registers record the annals of the eight kings of the First Dynasty and the fourth and fifth registers the nine kings of the Second Dynasty. By applying Manetho's chronology (see below) to the year spacing on both the Palermo and Cairo fragments, it has been found that the termination of the four registers would end evenly. It would thus appear that Manetho's chronology of the first two dynasties is substantially correct and that he had definite authority for dividing the groups of kings into dynasties. We can only hope that some day the excavator's pick will reveal more of this monument, which for the historian is indeed beyond price.

Of the Classical sources Herodotus was of limited value, for he trusted too much in the stories related to him by the dragomans who guided him in his travels in Egypt, apparently making no attempt to establish the historical truth of the information thus obtained. But the fragmentary extracts taken from the writings of Manetho by Josephus and by the Christian chronographers Africanus (A.D. 300) and Eusebius (A.D. 340) were of immense importance and formed the framework on which Egyptian history has been built.

Manetho, a native of Sebennytus in Lower Egypt, lived in



the third century B.C. during the reign of Ptolemy II, on whose behalf he wrote a history of his native country. He was well qualified to do this, for he was apparently a priest of Heliopolis, the centre of Egyptian learning, and in consequence he must have had easy access to ancient records preserved in the temples. Unfortunately, Manetho's history is lost and we only have the extracts quoted by later writers six hundred years after the author's death, with all the resultant corruption through successive copying. Manetho divided his list of kings into dynasties, with the name of the locality from which each family originated. Certainly, with regard to the first two dynasties, his statements appear to be correct and there is little doubt that his authorities were sound. The Egyptian historian writing in Greek naturally gave a Greek form to the names of the kings, and, although archaeological research has proved that the monarchs he enumerates existed, the question of individual identification remains obscure.

These then were the only sources of knowledge regarding the foundation of Egypt's Pharaonic history that were available to the Egyptologist at the end of the last century. Meagre indeed; it is not surprising that the period of the first two dynasties could be dealt with in eleven pages in the first edition of Petrie's history published in 1894.

Suddenly the mists of historical obscurity were cleared by a series of remarkable discoveries in excavations at Abydos, Hieraconpolis, and Nagadeh.

In 1894 Quibell, digging near Edfu on the site of Hieraconpolis, found evidence of the first known kings of Egypt, the immediate predecessors of the First Dynasty. These were Selk, 'the Scorpion', and Narmer, the most notable relics of whom were the inscribed ceremonial mace-head of the former and the famous slate palette of the latter, both historical documents of great value. Quibell also discovered relics of the two Second Dynasty kings Kha-sekhem and Kha-sekhemui.

## INTRODUCTION

In 1896 de Morgan, then Director of the Service of Antiquities, discovered at Nagadeh a gigantic tomb which, from the objects found in it, was identified as the burial place of Hor-aha, first king of the First Dynasty. However, later research has shown that it is more probable that it was the sepulchre of Nithotep, Hor-aha's mother. Apart from the value of the architectural information which this great structure yielded, the discovery was rich in objects, the most important of which was a small ivory label inscribed with the name of Hor-aha in conjunction with the name Men, thus perhaps identifying this king with Manetho's Menes.

The following year Amélineau, digging in an area at Abydos known as Um-el-Qu'ab, 'the Mother of Pots', found a group of great pit graves which were at that time identified as the tombs of many of the kings of the Archaic Period. Unfortunately, Amélineau had little or no archaeological training and his method of excavating this site, one of the most important ever found in Egypt, became another tragedy of Egyptology. Financed as he was by collectors, Amélineau's whole attention was directed to the collection of *objets d'art* and he neglected even the most rudimentary recording of the progress of his work. It was even reported that duplicate stone vessels were destroyed in order to enhance the value of those preserved. It is probable that such reports were exaggerated, but certainly destruction of irreplaceable evidence through ignorance and neglect was widespread. Having continued his work of devastation for four years, Amélineau finally relinquished his concession. Petrie immediately reopened the excavations and in two seasons of brilliant research rescued every scrap of evidence that his predecessor had not completely obliterated. By his painstaking work, he was able to trace the architectural development of the funerary structures and to identify their royal owners. From the mass of disordered evidence, he established the order of succession of

the kings of the First Dynasty so soundly that with small modifications his reconstruction of the chronological position of each monarch still stands at the present day and is confirmed by discoveries made at Sakkara forty years later.

With these discoveries the story of Egyptian civilization was pushed back nearly 600 years, but after the first excitement the interest of scholars subsided and research concerning the period diminished. Further discoveries were made at Tarkhan by Petrie in 1913 and Quibell established the existence of large archaic tombs at North Sakkara in 1912; but strangely enough these discoveries were not followed up by others. It would appear that scholars were discouraged by the paucity of inscribed material and their comparative failure to solve the many puzzles of archaic writing. New and exciting finds were revealing the cemeteries and settlements of the predynastic inhabitants of the Nile valley. The study of these finds claimed the attention of the Egyptologist who specialized in research into Egyptian origins, to the exclusion of further progress in adding to our knowledge of the birth of Pharaonic civilization.

The lull continued until 1932 when Reisner, with a view to the preparation of his great work on the evolution of funerary architecture, asked Cecil Firth, then Chief Inspector of Antiquities, to turn his attention to the long-neglected archaic cemetery at North Sakkara where Quibell had excavated in 1912. Firth cleared two areas, but died before he could fully record the results of his work, and the writer received instructions from the Director-General of the Department of Antiquities to re-excavate the areas he cleared so that they might be published. Firth's excavations had not been very detailed; the re-examination of part of a large First Dynasty tomb partly cleared by him resulted in some startling discoveries, and arrangements were made for the systematic clearance of the whole area. From 1936 to the outbreak of

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war this detailed work continued and a series of large tombs, almost certainly the northern counterparts of the royal monuments of the First Dynasty kings at Abydos, was discovered.

The work of excavation was renewed after the war and until 1956 was conducted by the writer for the Egypt Exploration Society on behalf of the Antiquities Service of the Egyptian Government. In addition to this, Zaki Saad, who assisted in the work at Sakkara before the war, has been engaged since 1942 in clearing a vast cemetery of the lesser nobility and the middle class of the First Dynasty which he discovered at Helwan on the east bank of the Nile opposite Sakkara. The excavation of these two great cemeteries which housed the dead of ancient Memphis 3000 years before Christ has yielded a new mass of material, and Egyptology has taken renewed interest in the problem of the origins of Pharaonic civilization.

Although much new inscribed material has been recovered, the certain interpretation of the archaic inscriptions yet escapes us; but progress is being made and, as more texts become available, there is little doubt that the philologist will finally discover the key which will open this valuable storehouse which contains the secret of the beginnings of Egypt's history. Already our knowledge of the architecture, art, epigraphy, pottery, stone vessels, and other materials is such that we can date these relics to the early, middle, and late parts of the First and Second Dynasties. Egypt's first Pharaohs are no longer shadowy figures of myth and legend, but with the advance in research are rapidly becoming real persons; the results of their achievements are often better defined and clearer to us than those of later periods.

But even with the increase of our knowledge concerning this remote period of Egypt's history, there still remain many features on which Egyptologists are not in agreement and in the various works dealing with the subject the student is often confused by the conflicting viewpoints of authorities who



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only too often fail to present the evidence for and against their conclusions. This is unfortunate but understandable, for on many facets of the history and culture of the period the evidence is so scanty that the full presentation of all the conflicting interpretations of one's colleagues would be impossible. This is so particularly in the case of the present work. Lack of space prevents me from giving all the evidence in support or otherwise of certain historical conclusions, or even of attempting the proper justification of opinions that may differ from those of other scholars. However, I think it would be appropriate here to summarize some of the more important points of difference.

First and most important is the vexed question of chronology. The diversity of opinion among Egyptian historians will be appreciated by an examination of the dating of the duration of the First and Second Dynasties submitted in the following selection of comparatively recent works:

BREASTED, <i>A History of Egypt</i> , 1921.	3400-2980 B.C. = 420 years.
HALL, <i>Cambridge Ancient History</i> , vol. I, 1924.	3500-3190 B.C. = 310 "
WEIGALL, <i>A History of the Pharaohs</i> , 1925.	3407-2888 B.C. = 519 "
DRIOTON and VANDIER, <i>Les Peuples de l'Orient Méditerranéen: l'Égypte</i> , 1938.	3197-2778 B.C. = 419 "
SEWELL, <i>The Legacy of Egypt</i> , 1942.	3188-2815 B.C. = 373 "
FRANKFORT, <i>Kingship and the Gods</i> , 1948.	3100-2700 B.C. = 400 "
HAYES, <i>The Scepter of Ancient Egypt</i> , 1953.	3200-2780 B.C. = 420 "

The dating of the earlier Egyptologists, placing the foundation of united Egypt in the region of 4400 B.C., has long been discarded, and indeed the limited tests of that new aid to archaeological research – radiocarbon technique – have shown that a chronology based on the premise of a third

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complete Sothic cycle is certainly incorrect.\* Nevertheless, as will be seen above, there is still considerable divergence among contemporary historians, and, with the exception of Weigall, no acceptance of Manetho's figure of about 550 years covering the period from the accession of Menes to the end of the Second Dynasty. Yet such a period would not seem excessive, from the archaeological evidence. At Sakkara it is certain that the great tombs of the early First Dynasty were in complete ruin by the end of the Second Dynasty. Structures that stood at least six metres in height were reduced to not more than one metre above their original ground level, and tombs of the early Third Dynasty were built on top of what remained of them. Such destruction of buildings of immense size and strength, with main walls varying from two to five metres in width, could only happen over a considerable period of time, and 550 years would in my view be a reasonable time to account for it. It is true that there is reason to doubt the strict accuracy of Manetho's figures, for they show every sign of being distorted by the carelessness of his copyists. Taking the First Dynasty as an example:

	<i>Africanus</i>	<i>Eusebius</i> ( <i>Armenian version</i> )	<i>Eusebius</i> ( <i>from Syncellus</i> )
Menes	62	30	60
Athothis	57	27	27
Kenkenes	31	39	39
Uenephes	23	42	42
Usaphaidos	20	20	20
Miebidos	26	26	26
Semempses	18	18	18
Bieneches	26	26	26
Total	253	252	252
	(actual 263)	(actual 228)	(actual 258)

\* Dates obtained by radiocarbon technique in 1950, on wood from a roofing beam of Tomb 3035 at Sakkara, were as follows:

Total years  $4803 \pm 260$  = between 3112 and 2592 B.C.

$4961 \pm 240$  = between 3250 and 2770 B.C.



Moreover, one unmistakable error is revealed by the Cairo fragment of the Palermo Stone, for on it we have the reign of Semempses (Semerkhet) given as nine years, whereas Manetho, in all versions, gives it as eighteen years. But, as I have pointed out on page 23, Manetho's figures accord well with the year spacing on the Palermo Stone and, even with the variations of the duration of individual reigns submitted by his copyists, the total figures for both dynasties remain substantially the same. In general I am inclined to accept his estimate of the length of the period as basically correct, for it is supported by the archaeological evidence.

The correlation of the early chronology of Egypt and Mesopotamia is of value in estimating the approximate date of the commencement of the First Dynasty. Four cylinder seals of undoubted Mesopotamian origin, dated the Uruk-Jemdat Nasr period (approximately 3500-2900 B.C.) have been found in Egypt. From objects discovered with them they may be dated to the Late Predynastic period (c. s.d. 50-63) immediately prior to the First Dynasty. But this correlation is only of potential value, and more evidence of this character is needed before any certain chronology can be accepted. At the present stage of our knowledge we cannot with safety go beyond a tentative estimate that the Unification of Egypt took place within the period 3400-3200 B.C.; there we must leave it.

Another feature on which scholars hold widely divergent views is the existence or otherwise of the so-called 'Dynastic Race'. Contrary to the theory expressed in the present work, that the rapid advance of civilization in the Nile Valley immediately prior to the Unification was due to the advent of the 'dynastic race', some scholars believe that outside influence was limited and that the cause was primarily a natural development of the native culture of the Predynastic period. Other authorities, while accepting the belief that external influence was responsible for the development of the

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new order, do not consider that it took the form of a horde invasion. They favour the view of a limited infiltration taking place over a considerable period. Again, even among scholars who accept the theory of a dynastic race who brought Pharaonic civilization to the Nile valley as proved, opinions are divided as to who these people were and whence they came. The cultural connexion between the Nile and the Euphrates at this early period is beyond dispute and generally accepted. But whether this connexion was direct or indirect, and to what extent Egypt was indebted to Mesopotamia, are still open questions. That it was not a slavish copying is obvious, and indeed in many aspects, particularly in architecture, Egypt's version of what is certainly a common conception is superior. This does not suggest the pupil or borrower; nevertheless we are faced with the fact that Mesopotamia can show a background of development, whereas Egypt cannot. Therein lies the former's claim to be the originator of architectural conceptions such as the panelled façade. But in comparing structures of this type, of more or less contemporary date, on the Euphrates and the Nile, it becomes apparent that Egypt's superiority is beyond question.

Modern scholars have tended to ignore the possibility of conquest and immigration to both regions from some hypothetical and as yet undiscovered area. But vast tracts of the Middle East and the Red Sea and East African coasts remain unexplored by the archaeologist, so that such a possibility must not be entirely ignored. Indeed the existence of a third party whose cultural achievements were passed on independently to Egypt and Mesopotamia would best explain the common features and the fundamental differences of the two civilizations.

Perhaps the most vital problem in connexion with the history of the period is the order of the succession of the kings of the First Dynasty, and here again scholars are divided in

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their opinions. The difficulty does not lie in the order of succession of the kings according to their Horus names, for with the exception of Queen Meryet-nit this is firmly established on archaeological grounds and there can be no dispute that Hor-aha was succeeded by Zer, Uadji, Udimu, Enezib, Semerkhet, and Ka'a in that order. The difficulty and subject of dispute, as explained on page 35, lies in the identification of the Horus names with those submitted by Manetho and those shown on the monumental lists. Above all, who was Menes? Some conception of the divergence of opinion among Egyptological historians may be gained by comparing the following king lists presented by modern authorities in works published within the last thirty years:

<i>Reisner</i>	<i>Smith</i>	<i>Hall</i>
1. Hor-aha (Menes)	Narmer } (Menes)	'Scorpion' } (Menes)
2. Narmer	Hor-aha }	Narmer }
3. Zer	Zer	Hor-aha }
4. Uadji	Uadji	Zer
5. Udimu	Udimu	Uadji
6. Enezib	Enezib	Udimu
7. Semerkhet	Semerkhet	Enezib
8. Ka'a	Ka'a	Semerkhet
		Ka'a

<i>Weigall</i>	<i>Petrie</i>	<i>Hayes</i>
1. Hor-aha (Menes)	Narmer } (Menes)	Narmer (Menes)
2. Zer	Hor-aha }	Hor-aha
3. Uadji	Zer	Zer
4. Meryet-nit	Uadji	Uadji
5. Udimu	Udimu	Udimu
6. Enezib	Enezib	Enezib
7. Semerkhet	Semerkhet	Semerkhet
8. Ka'a	Ka'a	Ka'a

As will be seen, the crux of the whole problem of the succession lies in the question whether Menes is to be

identified with Narmer or Hor-aha, and which of these two kings, by reason of this identification, must be considered the first monarch of the First Dynasty. Let us first examine the points of evidence in support of Narmer's identification with Menes.

1. *The Narmer palette from Hieraconpolis.* In scenes commemorating a military triumph, the king is shown wearing both the White Crown of Upper Egypt and the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. He is thus portrayed as monarch of both states.

*Contra-comment.* There can be no doubt that Narmer inflicted military disasters on Lower Egypt and as a conqueror would assume the emblems of rule of his defeated opponent; but this would not necessarily make him the legal ruler of the Delta.

2. *The Narmer mace-head from Hieraconpolis.* In a ceremonial scene, Narmer is depicted as seated on his throne wearing the Red Crown of Lower Egypt. It has been suggested that this scene represents a marriage festival in which the conqueror Narmer is entering into an alliance with the hereditary princess of the Northern kingdom and that the princess in question may be Nithotep.\*

*Contra-comment.* This hypothesis is very plausible, but it still does not make Narmer the accepted ruler of United Egypt. See comment above on Evidence 1.

3. *Jar-sealings from Abydos showing the Horus name of Narmer alternating with the group Men.* This has been accepted by many authorities as absolute proof of his identity with Menes. Many of the First Dynasty jar-sealings show the Horus name of the king alternating with a group of signs which are thought to be the *nebti* name of the monarch in question.

*Contra-comment.* The falsity of this has been shown by the discovery of sealings of Hor-aha with his name alternating with three entirely different and distinct groups of signs, and it would appear probable that these groups are titles.† Furthermore, if these groups were in reality the *nebti* names, one would expect them to be prefixed by the usual formula of the signs of the 'Two Ladies', Nekhbet and Wadjet.

\*Newberry, article on Menes in *Great Ones of Ancient Egypt*, p. 37.

† Emery, *Hor-aha*, p. 8.



4. *The Cairo fragment of the Palermo Stone.* Most authorities are now agreed on purely archaeological evidence that Narmer was the immediate predecessor of Hor-aha. On the Cairo fragment the Horus name of Zer is accompanied by a cartouche reading Iteti, which name is given on the Abydos king list as the third monarch of the dynasty. Consequently Hor-aha would be second king, Narmer the first king and therefore Menes.

*Contra-comment.* Iteti is surely to be identified with the Athothis whom Manetho places as second king of the dynasty, which, if his placing is accepted, would bring Zer back to second place, with Hor-aha, his immediate predecessor, as first monarch. But the recent identification of 'Iterty' as the *nebti* name of Uadji again confuses both hypotheses, for this would place this king in second place, which on archaeological evidence is impossible. All this presupposes that the second, third, and fourth names on the Abydos list are different and not distorted versions of what was originally the same name. There is no doubt that they are suspiciously alike, and some authorities do consider them the same and have listed the second, third, and fourth kings on the Abydos list as having the same name.\* Should this be accepted, the evidence of the Cairo fragment of the Palermo Stone becomes valueless.

5. *The Hor-aha label from Nagadeh.* The writer of the label wished to commemorate the following event: at the death of the King Narmer, denoted in a very significant fashion by his *nebti* name, which is only of importance in the case of a dead king, his son Hor-aha erects the funerary tent and performs the deification ceremonies for his father, the king whose *nebti* name was Men. The basis of this hypothesis is as follows:

- (a) The triple enclosure lines around the *nebti* Men group is a primitive attempt to portray a triple repetition of a vaulted pavilion made of reeds, which was a conventional structure used in the deification ceremonies at the funeral of a dead king.
- (b) It is a principle of archaic epigraphy that when the writer couples the *nebti* name with the Horus name of a living king, he arranges the two groups of signs facing each other. In the

\* Hayes, *The Scepter of Ancient Egypt*, p. 34.

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case of the Nagadeh label this is not so; both the Horus and *nebti* names face in the same direction. This shows that they were not the names of the same individual.

- (c) The Horus name is applied exclusively to the living king; it survives him only in the names of places or buildings. From the reign of Semerkhet, the seventh king of the First Dynasty, the dead king is defined by his *nesu-bit* name in conjunction with his *nebti* name. Then the *nebti* was dropped and the *nesu-bit* formed a distinct titulary by itself. The royal lists of Abydos, Sakkara, and Turin cite the kings by their *nesu-bit* names because these lists deal with dead kings. It can therefore be concluded that the *nebti* name on the Nagadeh label is that of a dead king, while the Horus name is that of a living king.

*Contra-comment.* The argument that when the *nebti* name and the Horus name of a living king are coupled together, the *nebti* group is written in the reverse way to the Horus group, has no foundation. It is true that on the labels of King Ka'a the two names face each other, but there is significance in this, for the variation in direction of groups of hieroglyphic signs at this period is not unusual and is a common feature on many wooden and ivory labels. Moreover, the *nebti* and Horus names of the same king are shown on sealings in the same direction as on the Nagadeh label.\*

The suggestion that in the Archaic Period the Horus name was only used in reference to the living king and the *nebti* name to the king when dead is certainly wrong. With regard to the Horus name: it is difficult to reconcile this belief with the fact that it is the name which is used exclusively on the funeral stelae of the kings found in the Abydos tombs. Furthermore, on the granite statue in the Cairo Museum (see page 171) the Horus names of the first three kings of the Second Dynasty, Hotepsekhemui, Ra-neb, and Neteren, are engraved, in their order of succession. Presumably two at least of the three kings must have been dead at the time of writing and should therefore have been indicated by their *nebti* names. Again we have the label of King Ka'a with his Horus and *nebti* names written together.

\* Petrie, *Royal Tombs*, I, Pl. xxviii, No. 72 of Semerkhet.



The evidence in favour of Hor-aha's identification with Menes is as follows:

1. *The Hor-aha label from Nagadeh.* The *nebti* name Men, side by side with the Horus name of Hor-aha, indicates that they are the names of the same person, as on the other labels such as that of Ka'a. An argument has been advanced that the sign below the *nebti* group is not the draughtboard Men, but that it represents the chairs and pavilions of the Sed festival.\* However, most scholars are agreed that there can be no question regarding the identity of the sign being Men. This is shown by comparing it with the two forms of gaming pawns which were in common use during the Archaic Period (see page 250). Furthermore, a comparison with the Men sign painted in black and red on the back of the Hor-aha label from Abydos, which in itself may be another indication of the identification of this king with Menes, puts the question beyond doubt.†

*Contra-comment.* On the strength of the epigraphic evidence given above, we can only conclude that the *nebti* name refers to Hor-aha's predecessor.

2. *The big funerary installation of Hor-aha at Sakkara, the necropolis of Memphis, the city which Menes founded.* Tomb No. 3357 is the oldest dynastic monument at Sakkara and no traces of any relics of Narmer have been found there. This is significant, for monuments of Narmer's reign have been found at Tarkhan, further to the south. This suggests that, although the country to the north had been conquered it was at the time of his death by no means pacified, and the foundation of the new strategic capital of Memphis had yet to be accomplished.

*Contra-comment.* To be the founder of Memphis does not necessarily mean that you would be buried in its necropolis, and until the site of the city has been exhaustively investigated, it would be rash to conclude that no monuments of Narmer exist there. Furthermore, although the area of the big First Dynasty tombs has been completely excavated, other areas in the vicinity still await exploration.

I think I have given above a fair outline of the salient points

\*Vikentieff, 'The Nagadeh Tablet', *Annales du Service*, vol. XXXIII.

†Petrie, *Royal Tombs*, II, Pl. XI, 2.

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of argument for and against the rival hypotheses that Narmer or Hor-aha was Menes. One other alternative remains: that Menes was a composite personage of legend in whom were embodied the deeds and achievements of both Narmer and Hor-aha. But in my view, considering the evidence supplied by the Nagadeh label, this compromise solution is difficult to accept. I consider that the balance of evidence is in favour of Hor-aha being Menes and I think that the total absence of any monuments of Narmer in the Archaic Necropolis at Sak-kara is the most vital argument in support of this viewpoint. Hypotheses based on our, as yet, elementary knowledge of the epigraphy of this remote period cannot be balanced against the hard facts revealed by the pick and shovel of the excavator.

It would indeed be foolish to attempt to give anything in the nature of a final verdict on the many complex problems connected with this remote period of human history. Nevertheless, we have progressed, and many theories of only a few years ago have been established as facts, while many others have had to be discarded. Even with our present misty vision, we can see that the inhabitants of the Nile valley at the beginning of the third millennium before Christ were better organized and far more civilized, in our modern sense, than we had hitherto supposed.

## *Chapter I*

### THE UNIFICATION

AT a period approximately 3400 years before Christ, a great change took place in Egypt, and the country passed rapidly from a state of advanced neolithic culture with a complex tribal character to two well-organized monarchies, one comprising the Delta area and the other the Nile valley proper. At the same time the art of writing appears, monumental architecture and the arts and crafts developed to an astonishing degree, and all the evidence points to the existence of a well-organized and even luxurious civilization. All this was achieved within a comparatively short period of time, for there appears to be little or no background to these fundamental developments in writing and architecture.

Authorities are divided in their opinions as to the reason for this sudden cultural advance, but it would seem probable that the principal cause was the incursion of a new people into the Nile valley, who brought with them the foundation of what, for want of a better designation, we may call Pharaonic civilization. Whether this incursion took the form of gradual infiltration or horde invasion is uncertain, but the balance of evidence, principally supplied by the carvings on an ivory knife-handle from Gebel-el-Arak and by paintings on the walls of a late predynastic tomb at Hieraconpolis, strongly suggests the latter. On the knife-handle we see a style of art which some think may be Mesopotamian, or even Syrian in origin, and a scene which may represent a battle at sea against invaders, a theme which is also crudely depicted in the Hieraconpolis tomb. In both representations we have typical native

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ships of Egypt and strange vessels with high prow and stem of unmistakable Mesopotamian origin (Fig. 1). At any rate, towards the close of the fourth millennium B.C. we find the people known traditionally as the 'Followers of Horus' apparently forming a civilized aristocracy or master race ruling over the whole of Egypt. The theory of the existence of this master race is supported by the discovery that graves of the late predynastic period in the northern part of Upper Egypt were found to contain the anatomical remains of a people whose skulls are of greater size and whose bodies were larger

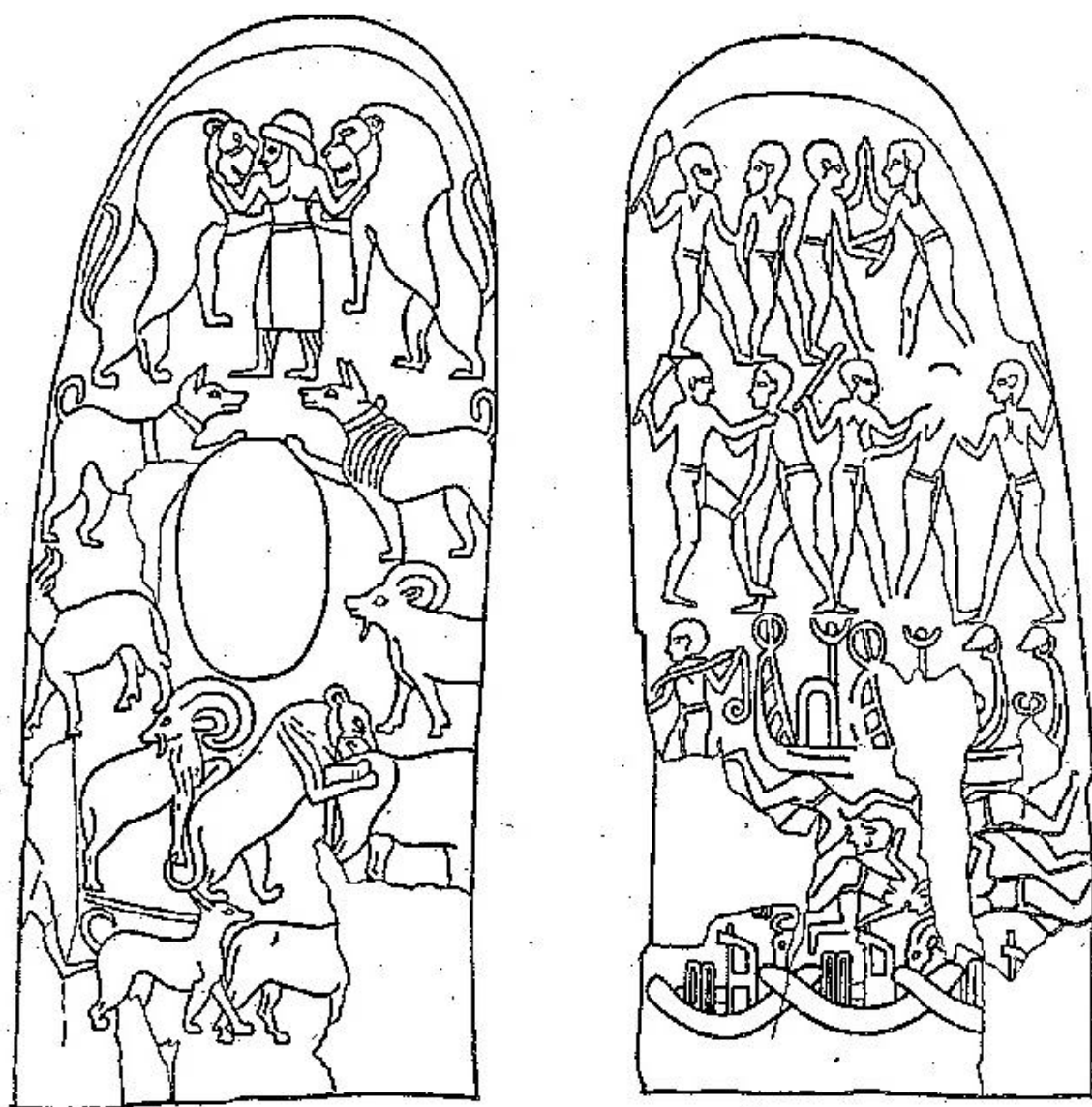


Fig. 1. The Gebel-el-Arak knife-handle

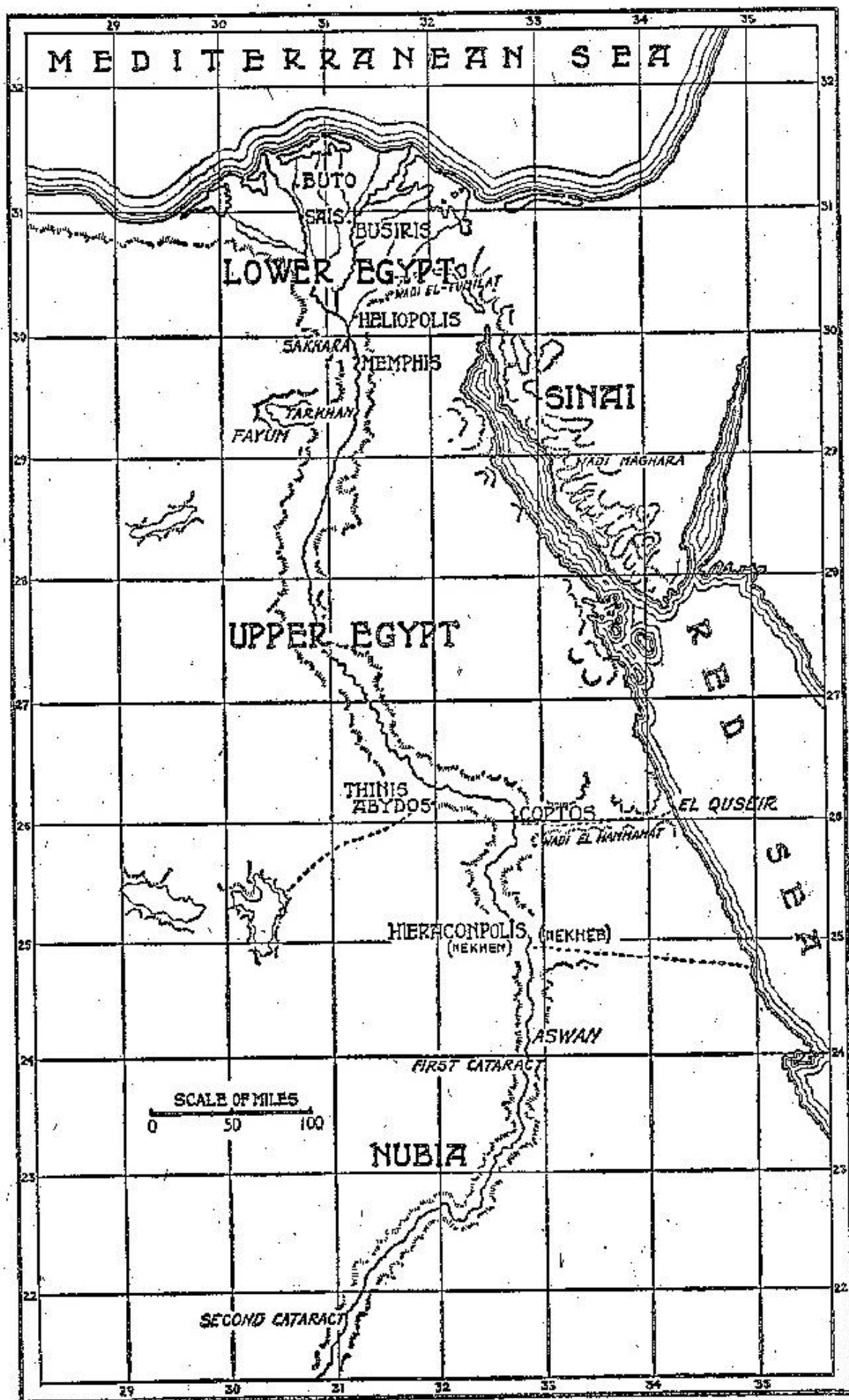


than those of the natives,\* the difference being so marked that any suggestion that these people derived from the earlier stock is impossible. The fusion of the two races must have been considerable, but it was not so rapid that by the time of the Unification it could be considered in any way accomplished, for throughout the whole of the Archaic Period the distinction between the civilized aristocracy and the mass of the natives is very marked, particularly in regard to their burial customs. Only with the close of the Second Dynasty do we find evidence of the lower orders adopting the funerary architecture and mode of burial of their masters.

The racial origin of these invaders is not known and the route they took in their penetration of Egypt is equally obscure. Similarities in decorative art, the common use of the cylinder seal, and above all the recessed panelling of their monumental architecture point unmistakably to a connexion with contemporary cultures in Mesopotamia. But with these similarities there are also great differences, and at the present stage of our knowledge it would be rash indeed to make any categorical pronouncement on this most important question. Assuming that the advent of the Dynastic people came in the form of a horde invasion and that it came from the east, the balance of evidence points to their entry being via the Wadi-el-Hammamat, the great trade route through the Eastern Desert which connects the Red Sea coast at El-Quseir with the Nile at Quft (Fig. 2). But it has been reasonably pointed out that the Hammamat route would present great difficulties for a large force because of water shortage over a distance of more than 200 kilometres. An alternative point of entry would be the Wadi-el-Tumilat on the east side of the Delta, a route which would enable invading armies to overrun the Delta, and by following the desert edge, reach the main stream

\*Derry, D. E., 'The Dynastic Race in Egypt', *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 42, 1956.





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of the Nile and ultimately subjugate Upper Egypt. Such a conquest, by either route, would only be achieved over a long period and by many campaigns under various leaders and by various tribes, so that in some ways it might well resemble the Saxon conquest of Britain and likewise have resulted in the foundation of several states struggling for leadership. Be that as it may, we find that at the dawn of the historic period Egypt was divided into the two rival kingdoms of the North and the South, both ruled by a royal house and aristocracy of the same race and both known traditionally as the 'Followers of Horus' – the demigods of Manetho's history. The original capitals of these two states appear to have been Buto in Lower Egypt and Hieraconpolis in Upper Egypt; but at the time of the final unification, the chief cities of the two powers were apparently Sais in the north and Thinis (or Abydos) in the south. There is some reason to suppose that at an earlier period the Northern kingdom conquered the South and her kings ruled the whole of Egypt for a time. But finally the balance of power changed and the Delta was in the end subjugated by the rulers of Upper Egypt.

Records of the wars of unification were found at Hierakonpolis, the ancient and religious capital of Upper Egypt, the most important of which were carved on two large ceremonial mace-heads of limestone and on two sides of a great votive palette of green schist. Both monuments belonged to different kings, but they both commemorate the conquest of the North, first by a king we call the Scorpion and secondly by Narmer, whom many authorities consider to be identical with Menes (see page 32).

The limestone mace-head of the Scorpion king (Fig. 3) is carved with representations on three registers, the first showing dead birds hanging from the standards of the Southern tribes, the birds representing the confederation of the North. The second register depicts the king wearing the White

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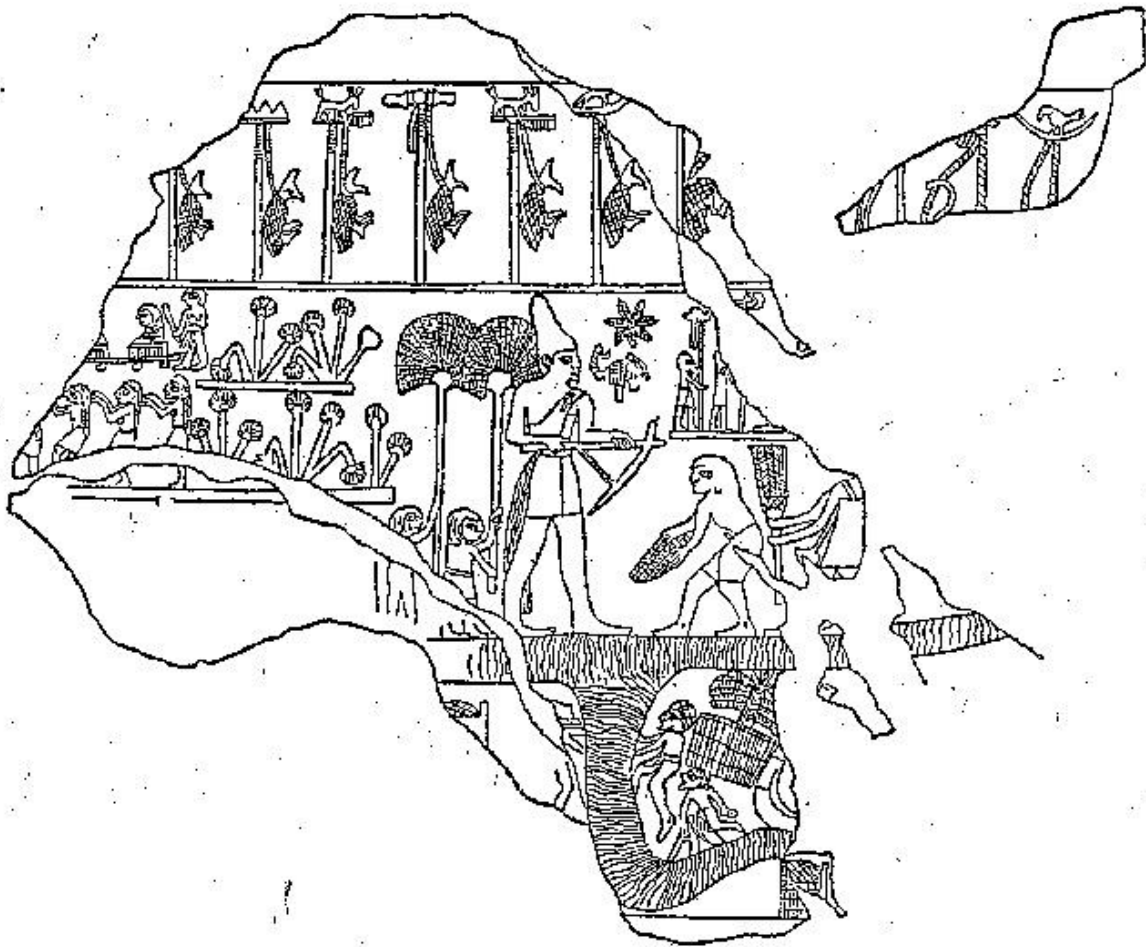


Fig. 3. The mace-head of the Scorpion king

Crown of Upper Egypt, excavating a canal amidst a scene of rejoicing, obviously symbolic of the re-organization of the country. The third register shows men engaged in the peaceful occupation of agriculture, and the mace-head thus records victory, re-organization, and peace.

With the palette of Narmer and a second mace-head also belonging to him, we are presented with records of a more concrete character, and the events they portray are more or less unmistakable. On the palette (Fig. 4), Narmer is shown wearing both the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt, and he obviously claimed to rule both lands. We see him marching in processions with his officials and the standard-bearers of his armies to view the bound and decapitated bodies of his Northern enemies, and also in the conventional posture of a victorious Pharaoh clubbing his prostrate foe.

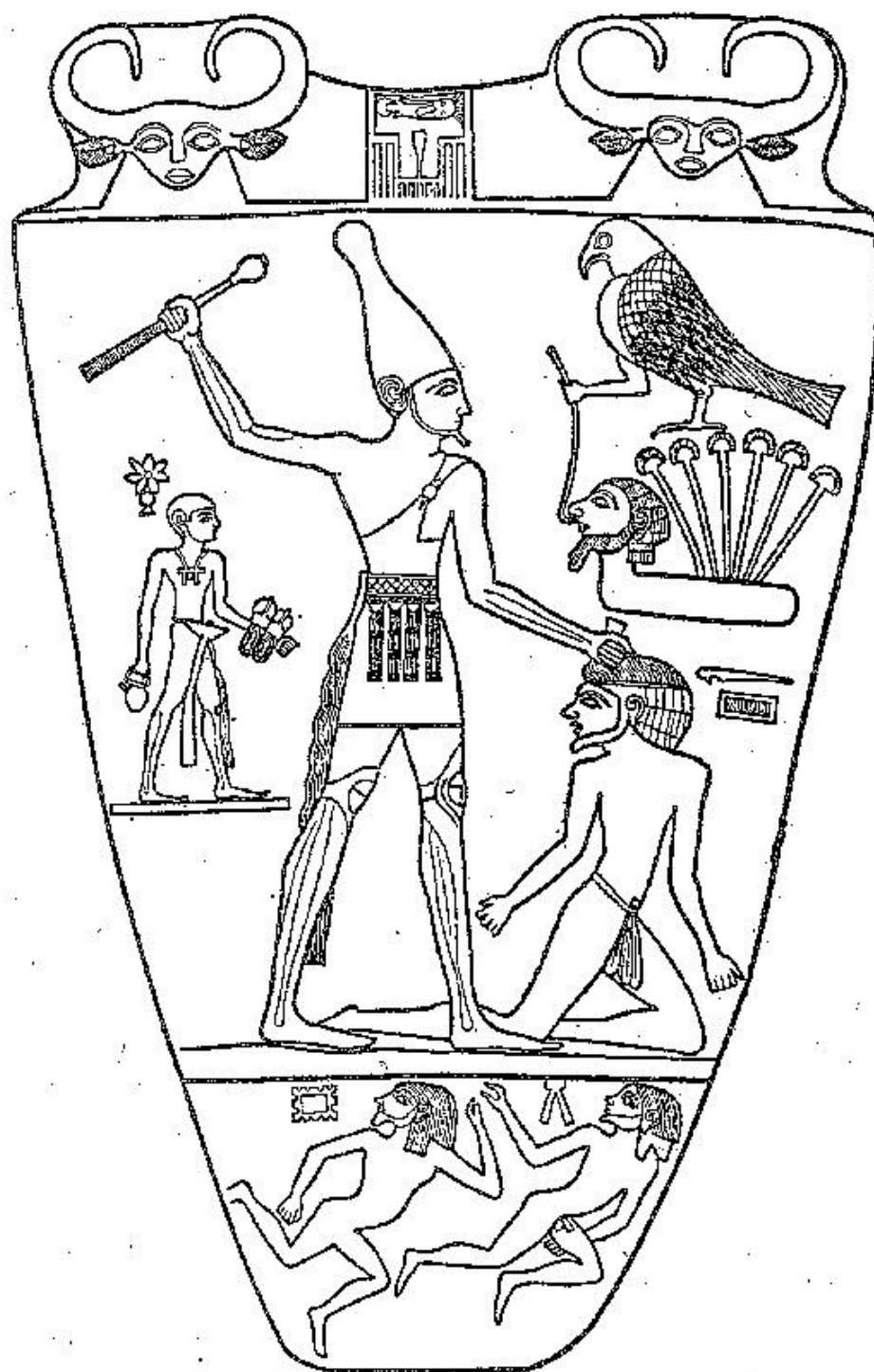
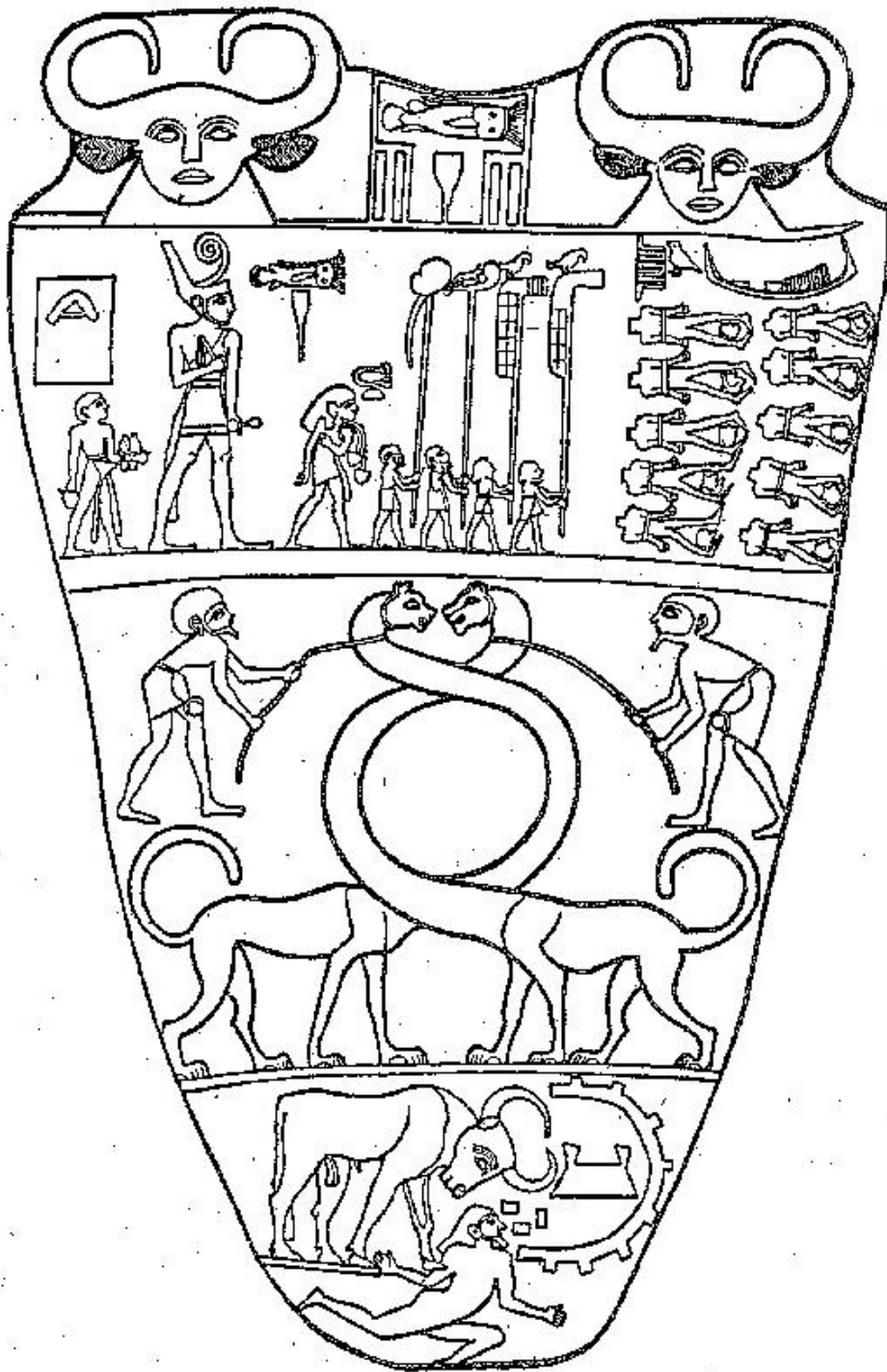


Fig. 4. The palette of Narmer

The mace-head (Fig. 5) shows Narmer wearing the red crown of the conquered North, enthroned and protected by the vulture goddess Nekhet of Hieraconpolis. In front of him are the standard-bearers of his army, a seated figure on a canopied palanquin; figures of captives, and numerals and

## THE UNIFICATION



signs representing 120,000 men, 400,000 oxen, and 1,422,000 goats captured in war. Some authorities interpret the seated figure as that of a man, but a comparison with similar figures on a wooden label from Sakkara shows that this is improbable and that it almost certainly represents a woman. It has been suggested that the figure is that of a captured Northern princess whom perhaps the victorious king would take in



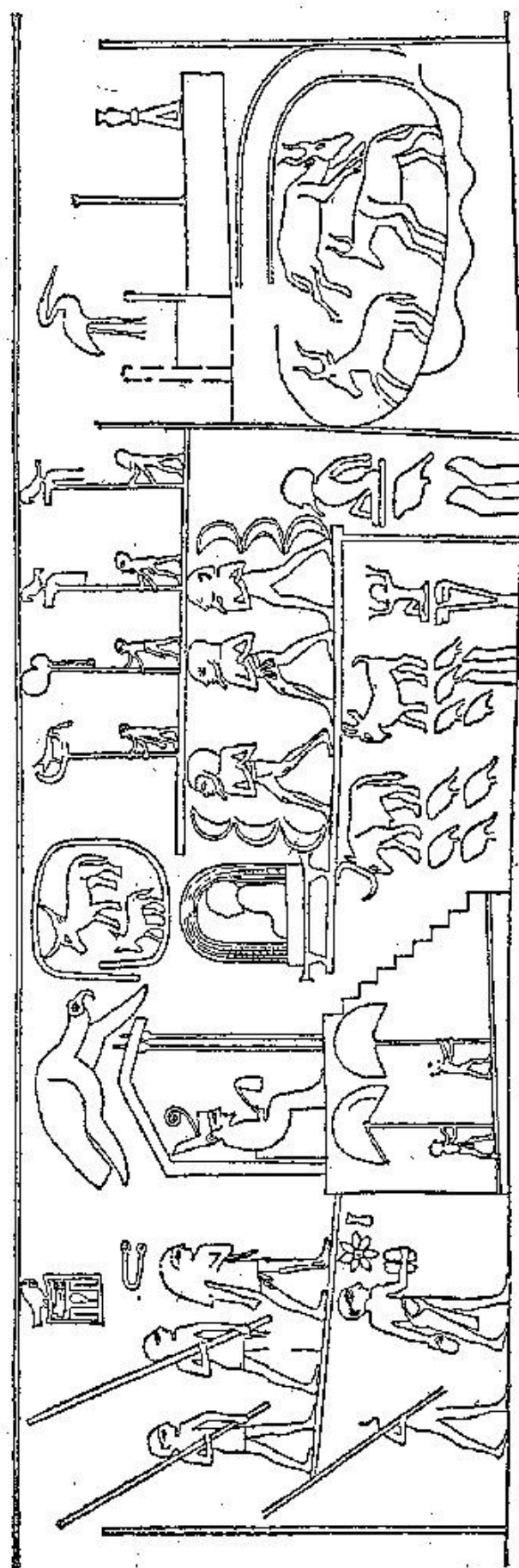


Fig. 5. The mace-head of Narmer

## THE UNIFICATION

marriage. Although this is pure hypothesis, it is not entirely improbable and perhaps we have here a representation of the union of Nithotep and Narmer, for there is strong evidence to show that the conqueror of the North attempted to legitimize his position by taking the Northern princess as his consort. To what extent Narmer consolidated his conquests is not known, but it is significant that no large monuments of his reign have as yet been found north of Tarkhan, and his queen Nithotep was buried in the south at Nagadeh, although a fragment of limestone carved with a figure of the queen has been recovered from a grave at Helwan opposite ancient Memphis. Apart from his activities in war, Narmer sent his trading expeditions into the Eastern Desert, and his name has been found on the rocks in the Wadi-el-Qash on the south side of the great trade route between Coptos and Quseir (Fig. 6).

The tomb of Narmer has been identified as B 10 in the north-west group at Abydos – it consists of a large brick-lined pit measuring over-all 11 by 9.4 metres. This monument is almost insignificant in comparison with the tomb of Nithotep at Nagadeh and we can only conclude that this was only the king's southern tomb and that his real burial place still awaits discovery, perhaps at Tarkhan or Sakkara.

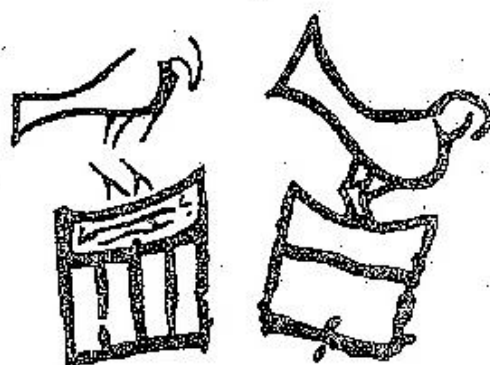
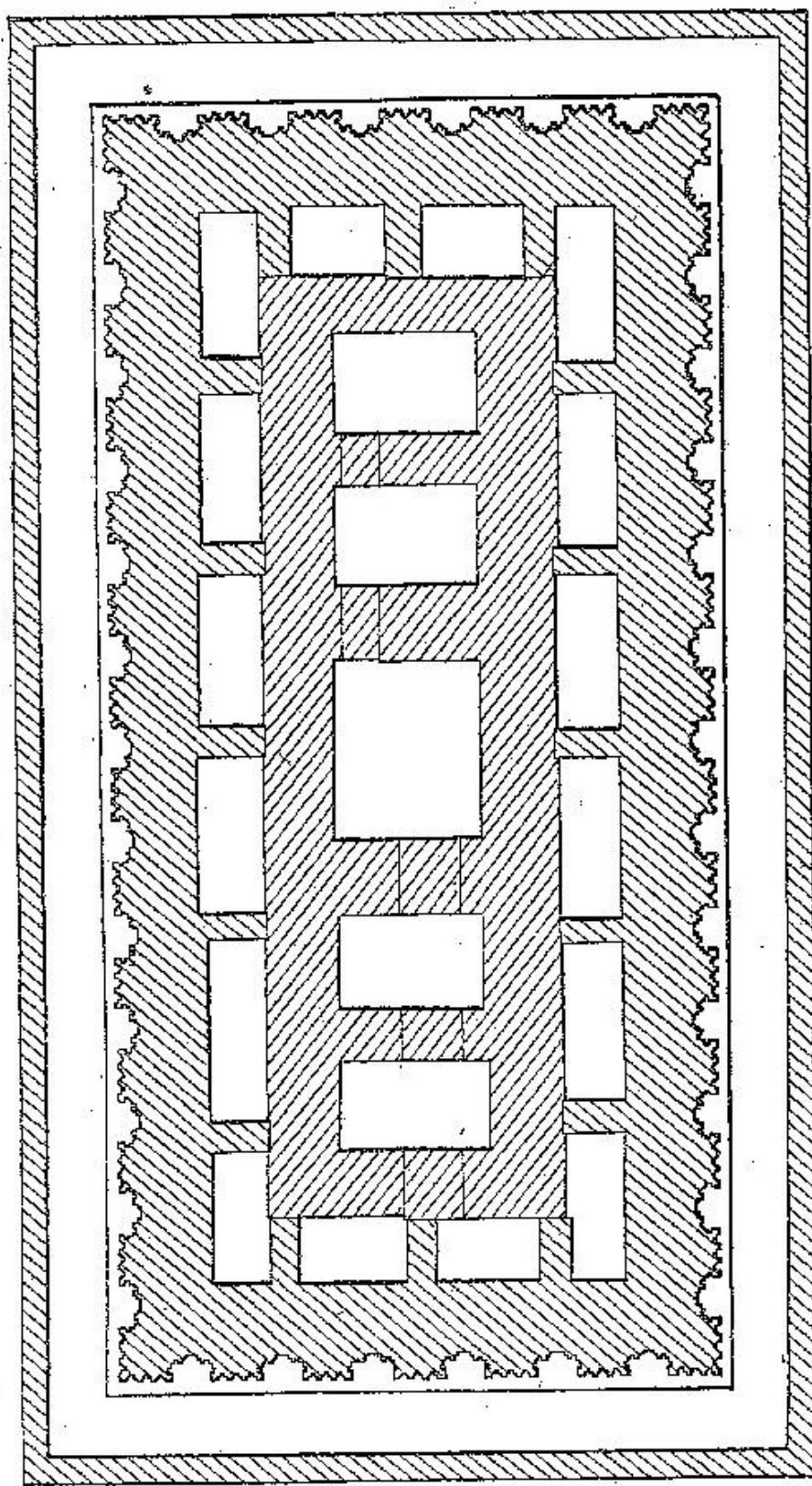


Fig. 6. Narmer inscription in the Wadi-el-Qash

The queen's tomb (Fig. 7) is a magnificent monument with an over-all measurement of 53.4 by 26.7 metres. The first of the northern type with recessed panelled superstructure, it is yet more primitive in design than its counterparts at Sakkara, for the burial chambers are constructed on ground level within the superstructure. It is strange that the



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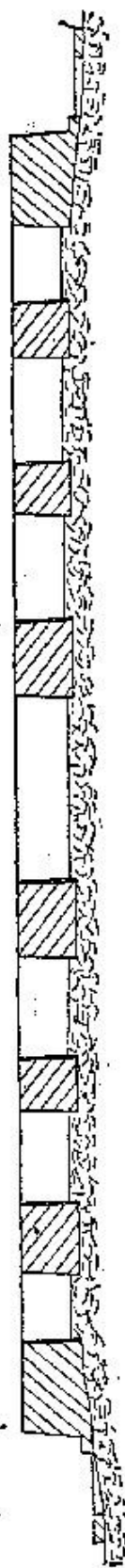


Fig. 7. Plan of the tomb of Nithotep at Nagadeh

## THE UNIFICATION

queen should have been buried so far south and we can only conclude that she died before the subjugation of the North was complete. Although Narmer's name has been discovered on objects in the tomb, it would appear that she was buried by her son Hor-aha, for many objects bearing his name were found in the monument, as well as those of the queen (Fig. 8).

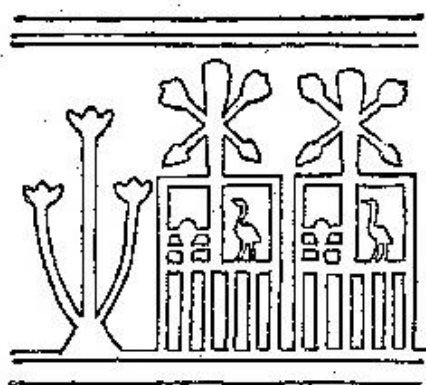


Fig. 8. Jar-sealing inscription  
of Nithotep



Fig. 9. Horus name  
of Hor-aha

## THE FIRST DYNASTY

### *Hor-aha (Figure 9)*

With the death of Narmer, the succession to the throne of an almost united Egypt passed to Hor-aha, who in the writer's opinion was the first king of the First Dynasty and may perhaps be identified with the Menes of the Classical historians (see page 36). Hor-aha (Fighting Hawk) was his first name as ruler of the Horus people of Upper Egypt, but as king of the united monarchies he assumed as his *Nebti* name the word Men (Established?). The *Nebti* name symbolized the fact that the bearer was the force uniting the two lands of the North and South (see page 107). The correlation of the two names was established when a small ivory label was discovered in the tomb of Queen Nithotep at Nagadeh, for this small object is inscribed with the Horus name of Hor-aha and the *Nebti* name of Men side by side (Fig. 10). The importance

of this label was such that the Nagadeh tomb was re-excavated by Garstang with the primary object of finding a fragment of it which was missing. He was more than successful, for he not only found the missing portion but he recovered a large part of another label of identical design, and from this second specimen we are able to restore an important part of the centre of the middle register, which, while secondary to the correlated names of the Horus and *Nebti* names, is of con-

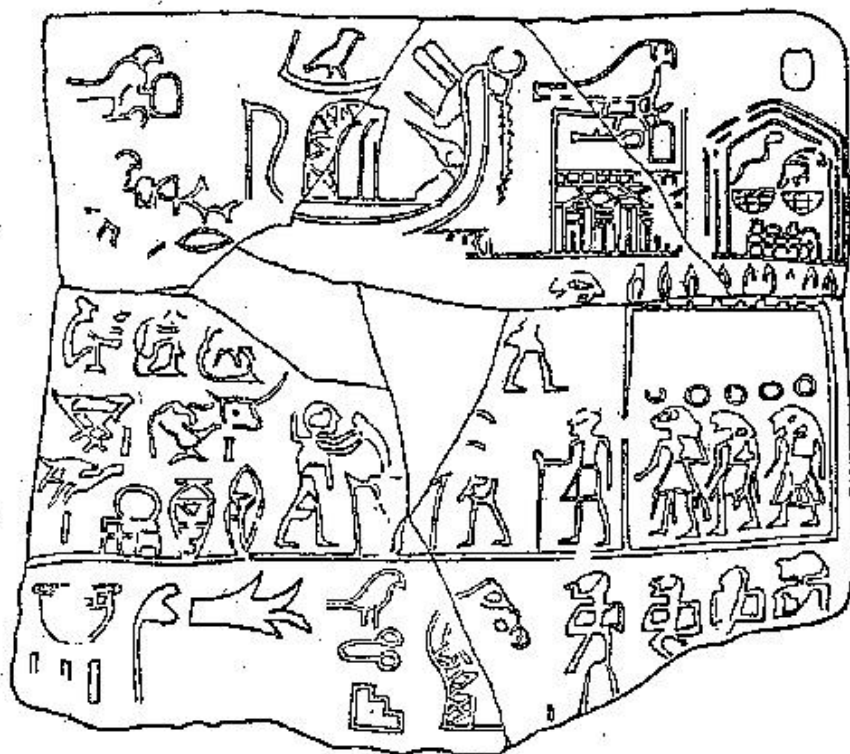


Fig. 10. The ivory label from Nagadeh

siderable historical importance. This scene appears to represent some ceremony commemorating the Unification of the Two Lands, represented by two human figures performing some function over an unidentified object – the ceremony was called 'Receiving the South and the North'.

Assuming that Hor-aha was the son of Narmer and Nithotep, his claim to rule both Upper and Lower Egypt was on the firm foundation of right of conquest and inheritance, and although it would appear that parts of the North disputed his sovereignty, most of the country was subject to him, and both



Egyptians and Libyans paid homage and brought him tribute. He was indeed King of the Two Lands, and the country was sufficiently pacified for him to turn his attention to the South, where he defeated the Nubians and established his rule as far up river as the First Cataract (Fig. 11). As an ex-

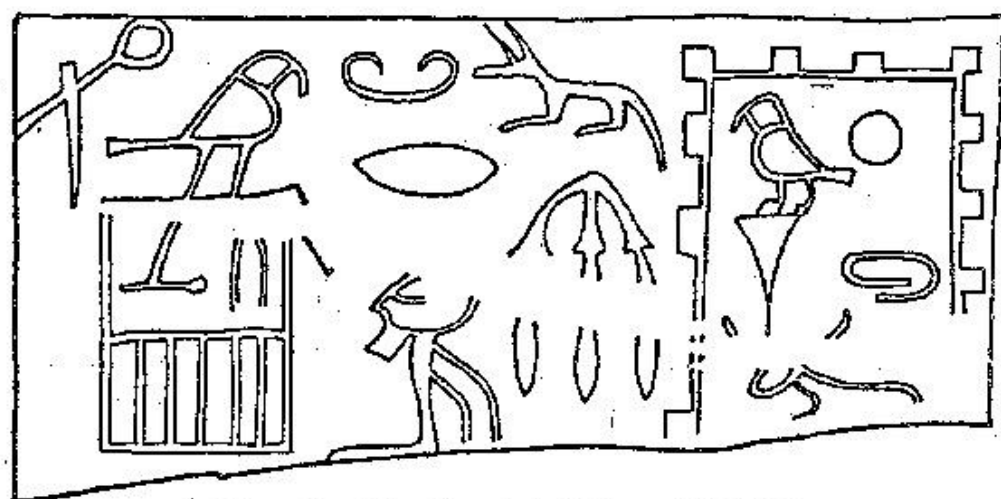


Fig. 11. Wooden label from Abydos

ample of his wise policy of conciliation in Lower Egypt we have the record of the building of a temple at Sais of the goddess Nit, who was the patron deity of the North (Fig. 12).

But in building, Hor-aha's greatest achievement was the foundation of the new capital of united Egypt in a locality some twenty miles south of the apex of the Delta near the natural frontier between the North and South. The building of this city, which was to be a centre of rule and culture for three thousand years, was a great engineering achievement, for it was found necessary to deflect the course of the Nile, and Herodotus tells us that the land had to be drained after the construction of a great dyke. The new capital, later known as Memphis, was called the 'White Wall' and from this strategic point Hor-aha ruled the newly-united Egypt. Here in his new capital he built a great temple dedicated to the god Ptah, who remained the patron deity of the city throughout its long history. Here also, on the desert edge behind the city, he erected his northern tomb, the first of a long

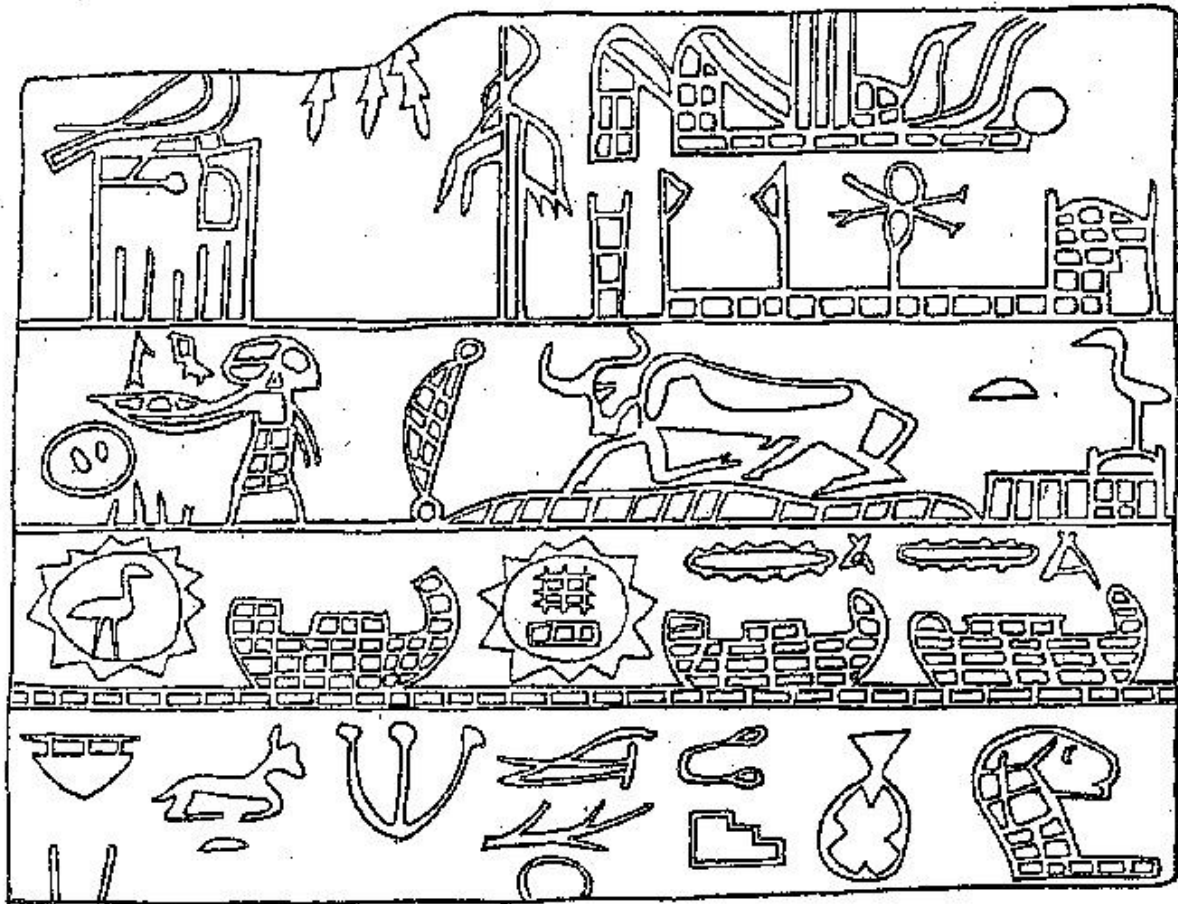


Fig. 12. Wooden label from Abydos

series of funerary monuments which were to be built by his successors. Traditional stories concerning Egypt's first pharaoh are recounted by Diodorus, but they are hardly credible and of little value. According to this classical writer, the king, while hunting in the Fayum, was treacherously attacked by his dogs and only escaped by jumping into Lake Moeris, where he was carried to the opposite shore by a crocodile. To commemorate this miraculous escape he built a city there and dedicated the lake to the crocodile. Diodorus also recalls that the king built a pyramid tomb for himself in the vicinity. The same author relates that the Egyptians first learned from him how to worship the gods and live in a civilized manner, an echo perhaps of his pacification of the country after the long period of anarchy and carnage during the struggle for unification. According to Manetho (Africanus),

the great king died in the sixty-third year of his reign from injuries received from a hippopotamus. This story is not entirely improbable, for we know that hippopotamus-hunting was a sport indulged in by the kings of the First Dynasty. However, it may only be a variant of the crocodile story of Diodorus.

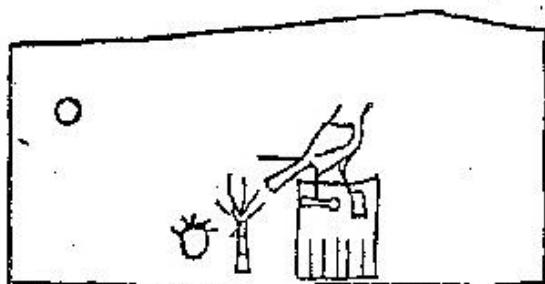


Fig. 13. Ivory label from Abydos

Both from Nagadeh and Abydos small ivory objects and labels have been recovered, bearing the name Berner-Ib, which might perhaps be translated 'Sweet of heart' (Fig. 13). The tomb of this individual (Fig. 14) has been identified in the north-west group of monuments at Abydos in close proximity to that ascribed to Hor-aha, and it would therefore appear possible that Berner-Ib was his queen.

Apart from the great tomb at Nagadeh, which was probably built by Hor-aha for his mother Nithotep, two other

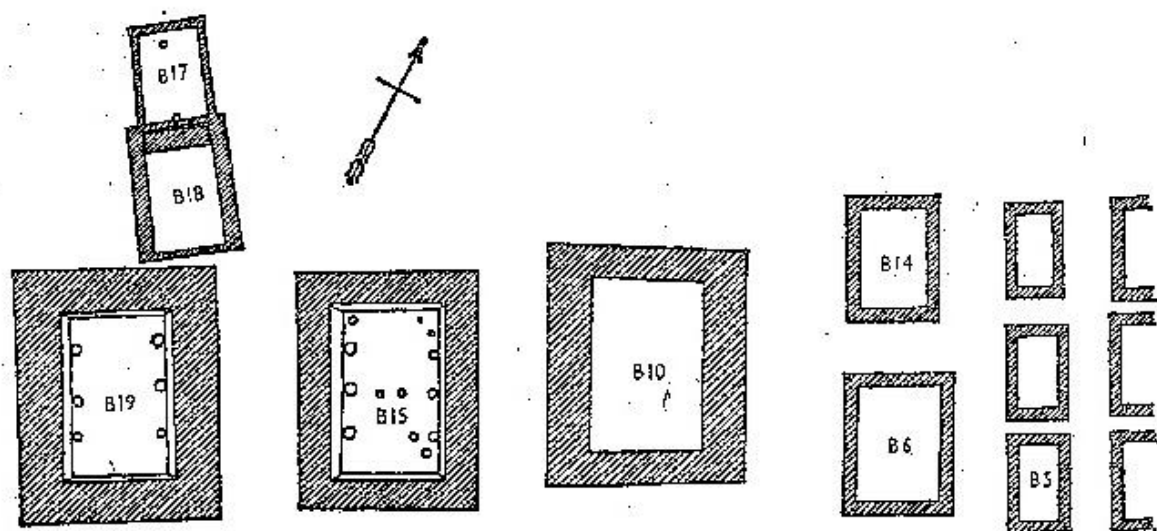


Fig. 14. Plan of the north-west group of tombs at Abydos

great monuments of the king are extant at Abydos and Sakkara which appear to be his northern and southern tombs.

The Abydos tomb B 19 (Fig. 14), which is the largest in the north-west group, has been identified as belonging to Horaha from objects found during its excavations. As with all the archaic tombs of Abydos the superstructure has entirely disappeared and only a great brick-lined subterranean chamber remains, in the floor of which are holes for wooden posts which must have supported its roof. The over-all measurement of the monument, including the heavy retaining walls, is 11.7 by 9.4 metres. In a smaller tomb adjacent to B 19 a small gold bar was found by Petrie. On it the name of Horaha is incised but its purpose is not known.

The northern tomb at Sakkara (Figs. 15 and 16), known as No. 3357, is a far larger and more pretentious structure, and although somewhat smaller than that of Queen Nithotep and similar in general design it is more elaborate and shows a later development, principally in the subterranean burial chamber. This consists of a great rectangular pit cut in the gravel and rock which is divided by cross walls into five separate rooms. These subterranean rooms were roofed with timber and above, built on ground level, is a large rectangular superstructure of brick with a hollow interior divided into a series of twenty-seven magazines to contain extra funerary equipment. The superstructure, with its exterior decorated with recessed panelling and surrounded by two enclosure walls, has an overall measurement of 48.2 by 22 metres. On the north side of the tomb were a series of small model buildings and a large brick-built boat-grave (Fig. 17). This had originally contained a wooden solar bark in which the spirit of the great king would travel with the celestial gods in their journey across the heavens by day and through the underworld below the earth by night.

Both the Abydos and Sakkara monuments yielded objects



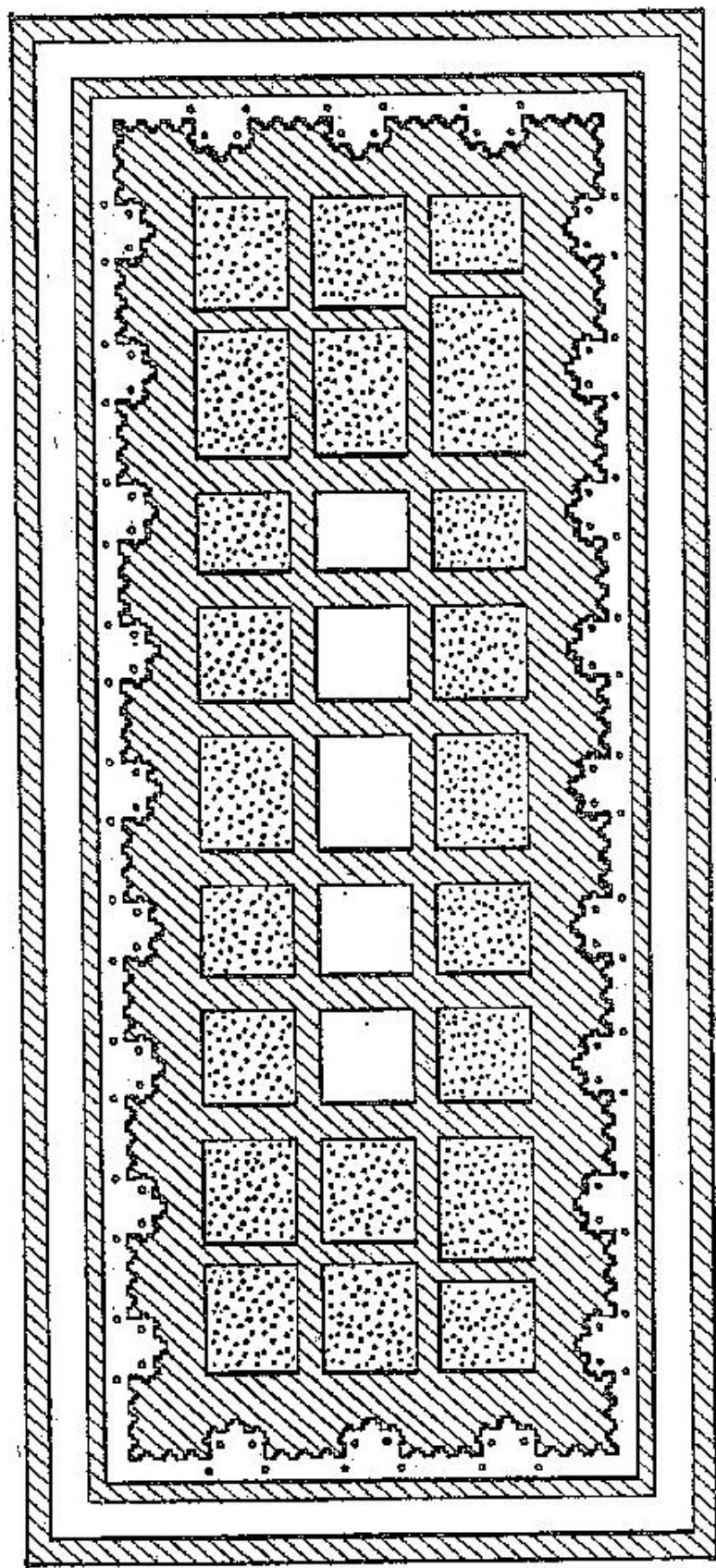


Fig. 15. Plan of Tomb 3357 at Sakkara

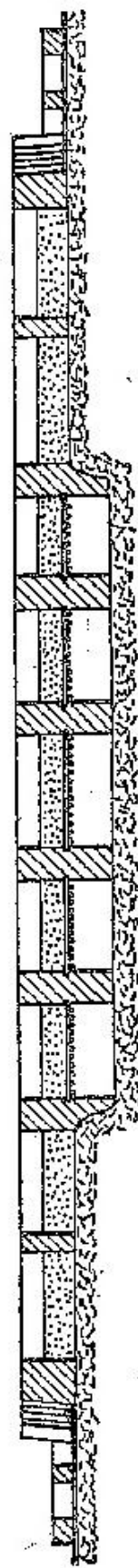


Fig. 16. Section of Tomb 3357 at Sakkara



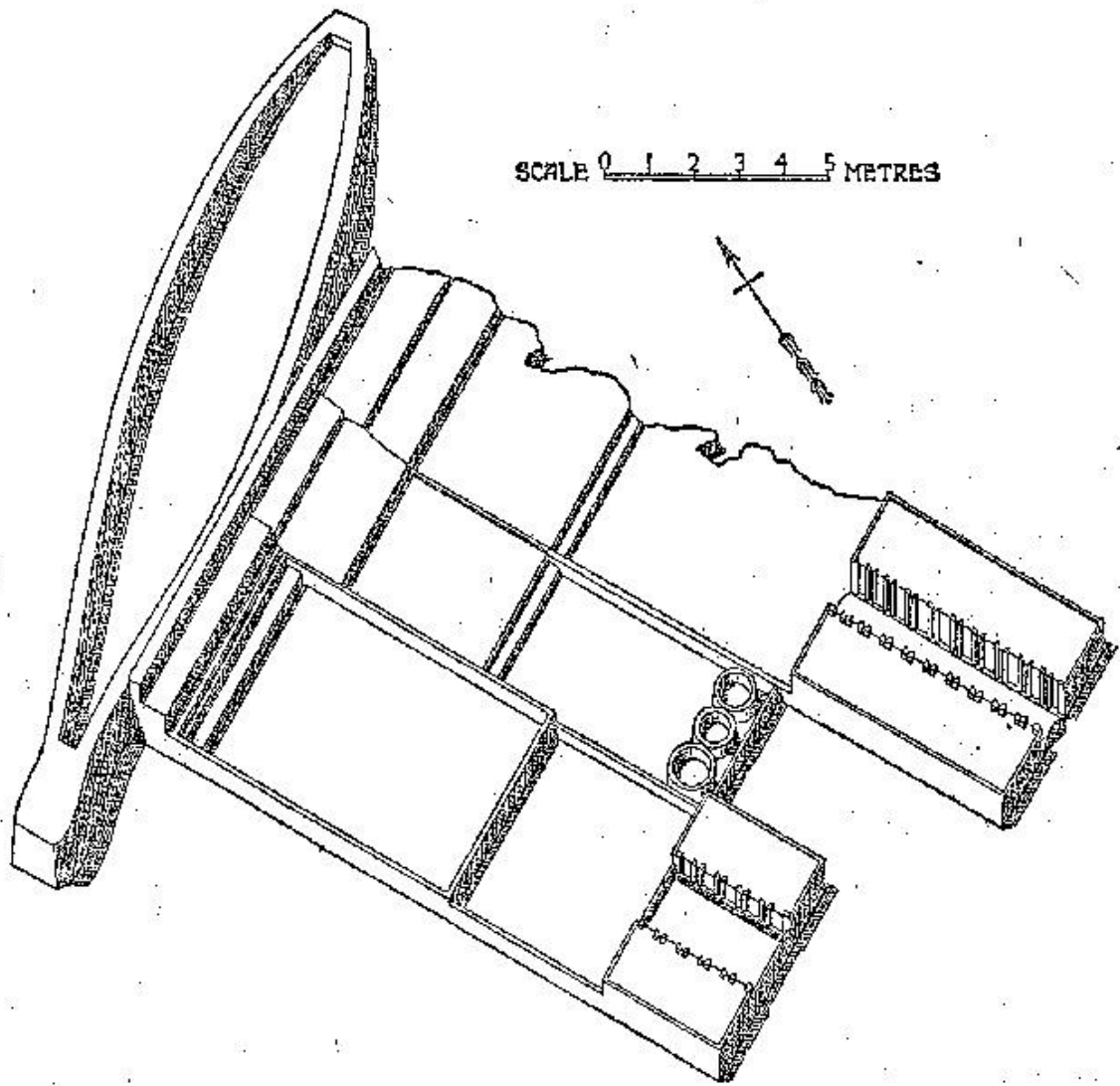


Fig. 17. Model estate and boat-grave of Hor-aha

bearing Hor-aha's name, mostly on wooden labels and clay jar-sealings (Fig. 18), and in the case of the Sakkara tomb, hundreds of small pottery jars with the royal name and contents painted on each one.

#### *Zer (Figure 19)*

Hor-aha was succeeded by Zer, perhaps to be identified with the second monarch of Manetho, who records that he reigned for fifty-seven years. Manetho also relates that this king, to whom he gives the name Athothis, built a palace at Memphis and that as a physician he wrote books on anatomy which were still extant in Manetho's day about 2800 years later.

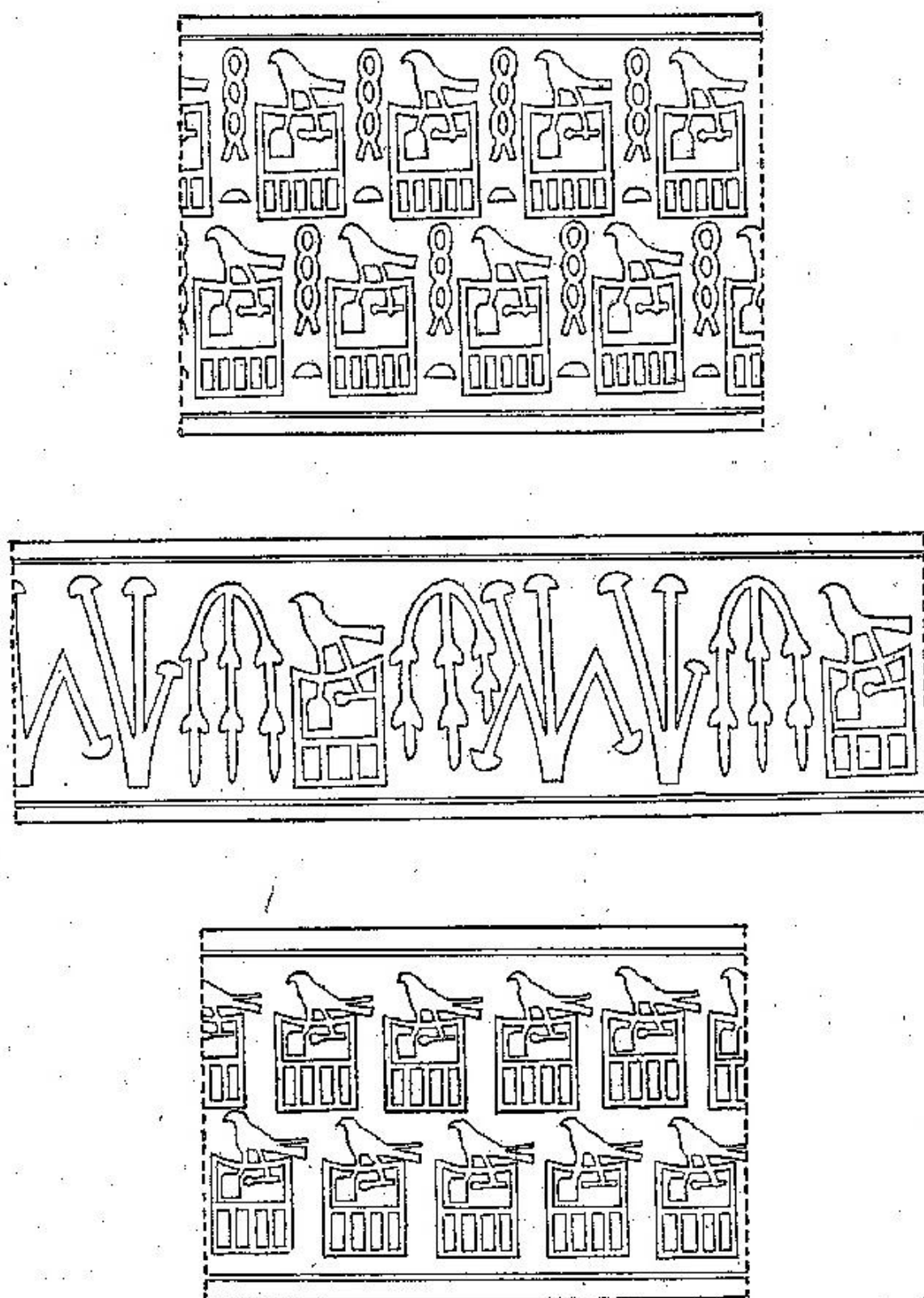


Fig. 18a. Examples of jar-sealing inscriptions of Hor-aha

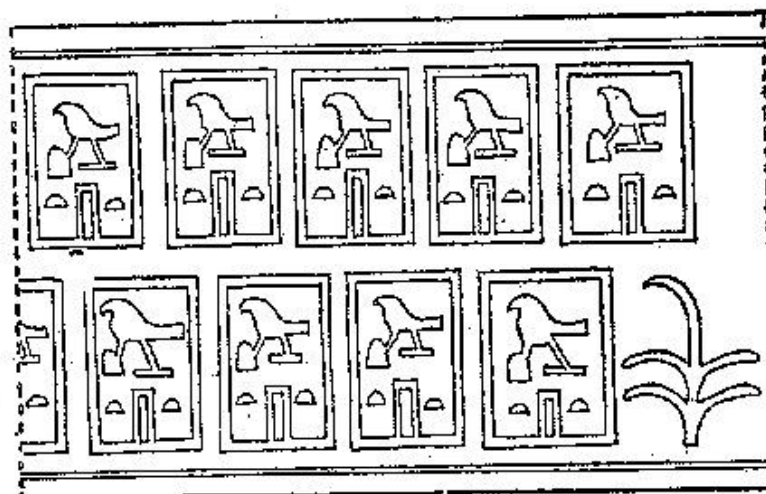
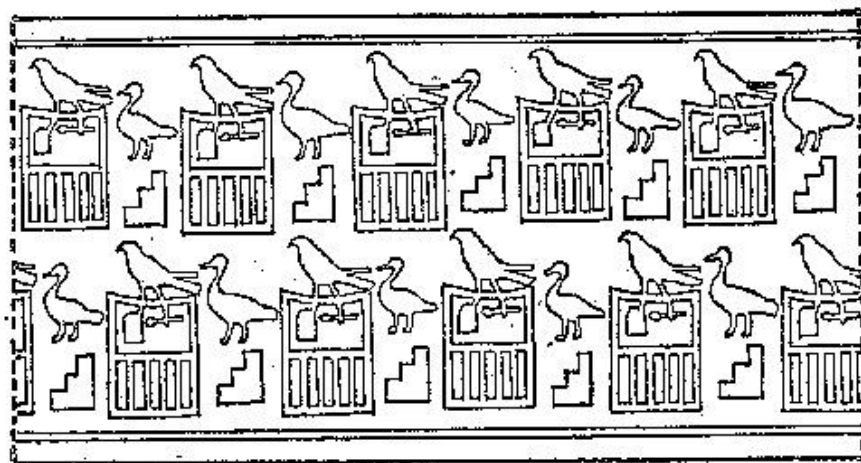


Fig. 18b. Examples of jar-sealing inscriptions of Hor-Aha

Of contemporary documents of Zer the most important are two labels, one of ivory from Abydos and the other of wood from Sakkara. Labels of this character apparently refer to the commodity to which they were attached, but they are dated by a year of the king's reign marked by the principal events of that period. Unfortunately, our knowledge of the archaic hieroglyphs is so limited that reliable translation of these invaluable texts is at present beyond our power and we can only pick out odd words and groups which give us only the vaguest interpretations. Of the two labels in question, that of Abydos (Fig. 20) seems to record a visit of the king to Buto and Sais, the sacred towns of Lower Egypt. The Sakkara label (Fig. 21) apparently records some important religious



Fig. 19.  
Horus name  
of Zer

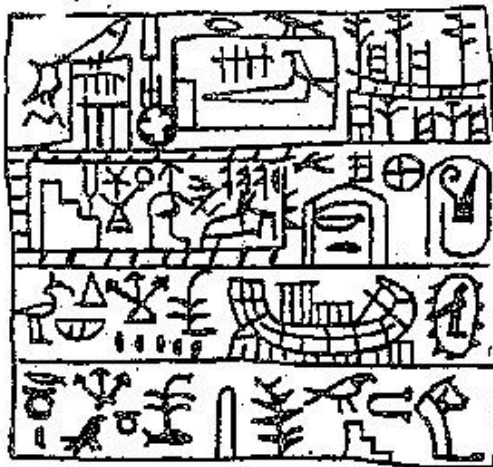


Fig. 20. Ivory label of Zer  
from Abydos

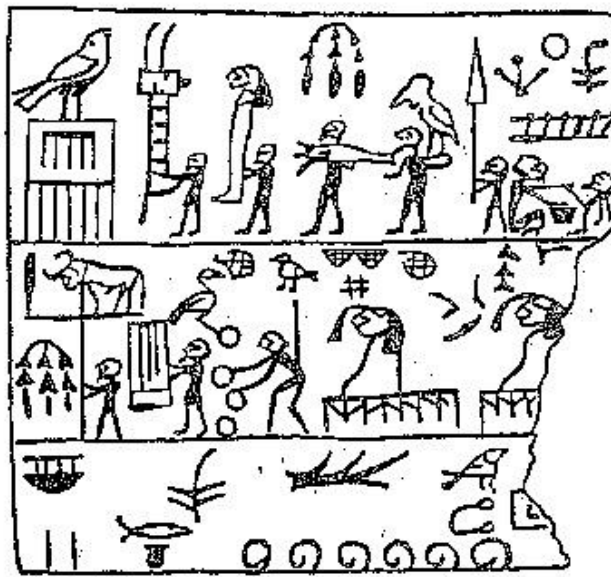


Fig. 21. Wooden label of Zer from  
Sakkara

festival at which human sacrifice was performed. Zer continued the Nubian wars of his predecessor and his armies penetrated as far south as the Second Cataract. Near Wadi-Halfa, on the west bank of the Nile, there is a rock inscription (Fig. 22) which shows the Horus name of Zer, in front

of which stands a human figure in the attitude of captivity holding the bow sign which represents Nubia. Another captive is shown tied to an Egyptian warship, below which are bodies of slain enemies. Whether this primitive monument records merely a punitive raid by Zer or an actual conquest it is impossible to say; but objects of undoubted Egyptian

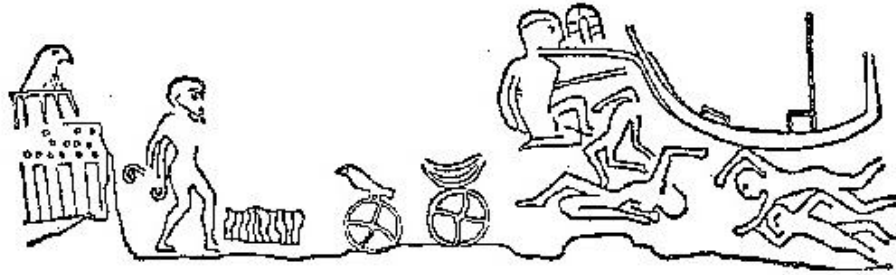


Fig. 22. Rock inscription of Zer

craftsmanship of this period have been found in Lower Nubia. It is possible that Zer waged war on his eastern frontier, for a roughly inscribed alabaster palette from his tomb at Sakkara shows the king in the familiar pose of a conquering pharaoh striking down a Libyan captive (Fig. 23). Recent excavations at Sakkara have resulted in the discovery of a large tomb belonging to Queen Her-nit who, from the evidence of inscribed material found in it, we may well consider to have been Zer's consort.

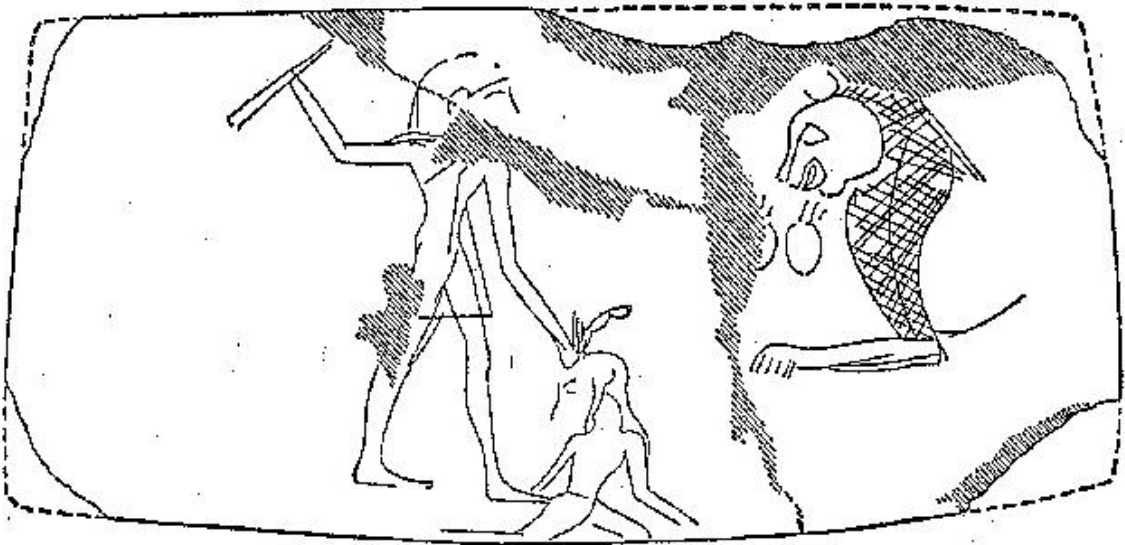


Fig. 23. Inscribed palette of Zer



## THE UNIFICATION

The consolidation of the unification of Egypt continued throughout Zer's reign and there are no records of internal strife. On the contrary, there appears to have been a considerable step forward in prosperity, shown by expansion in the production of arts and crafts, outstanding examples of which may be seen in the jewellery recovered from the king's southern tomb at Abydos, the vast collection of copper vessels, tools, and weapons found in the northern tomb at Sak-kara, and the magnificent gold-handled flint knife now in the Toronto Museum.

Zer's southern tomb at Abydos (Fig. 24) is far larger than

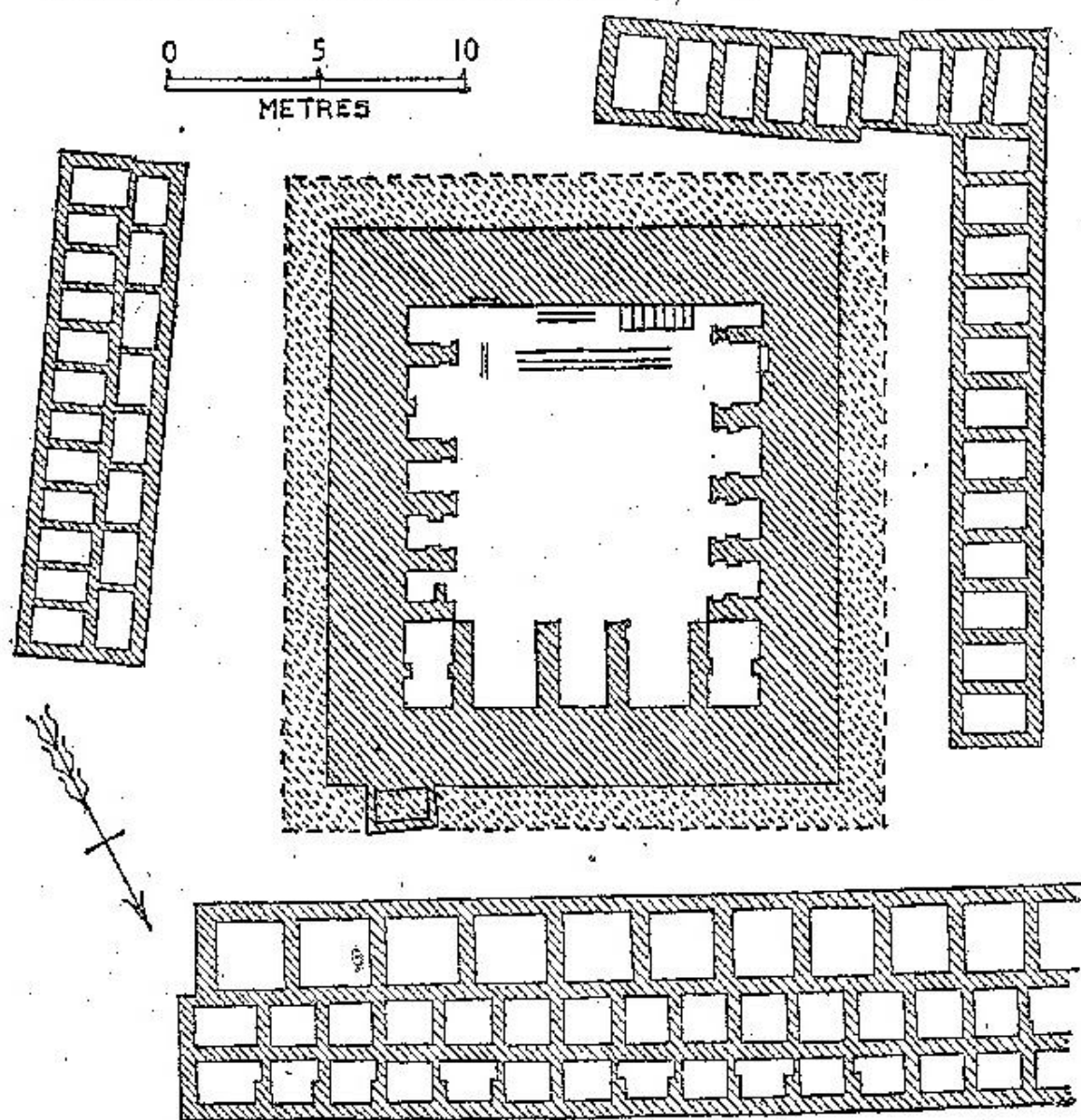


Fig. 24. Plan of Tomb O at Abydos

that of his predecessor in the same area. It consists of a large brick-lined pit, rectangular in shape with irregular magazines on three sides. The actual burial chamber appears to have been built of wood and the whole tomb was originally roofed with timber beams and planks. No trace of the superstructure remains, but the dotted lines on the plan (Fig. 24) show the generally accepted reconstruction. The over-all measurement of the monument, including the restored superstructure, is 21.5 by 20 metres. Surrounding the tomb were rows of subsidiary graves, 338 in number, which contained

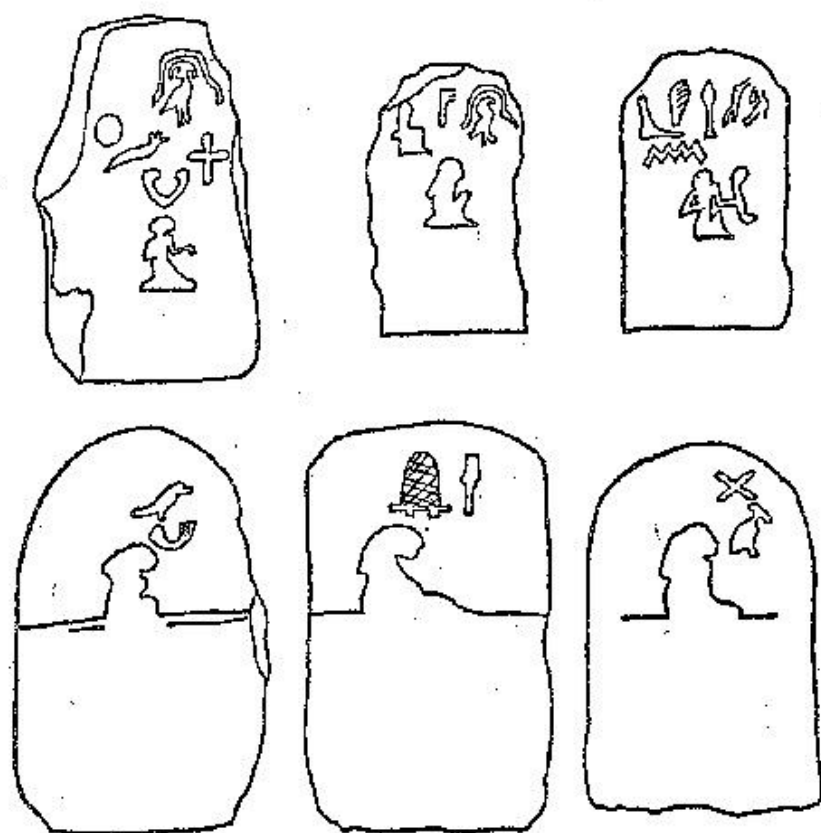


Fig. 25. Examples of stelae from subsidiary graves at Abydos

the bodies of retainers sacrificed at the royal burial. Most of these sacrificed persons were women and with many of them were crude stone stelae recording their names (Fig. 25). Fragments of the great royal stela were also found in the tomb (Fig. 26) but the most astonishing discovery was the jewellery mentioned above: valuable bracelets of gold, turquoise, amethyst, and lazuli were found on the bones of a

human arm which had been left for some unexplained reason by the robbers, and even more strangely, overlooked by subsequent plunderers (Fig. 133).

The northern tomb provisionally ascribed to Zer at Sak-kara (Fig. 27) is much larger than his Abydos monument and is almost identical in size with the northern tomb of Hor-aha.

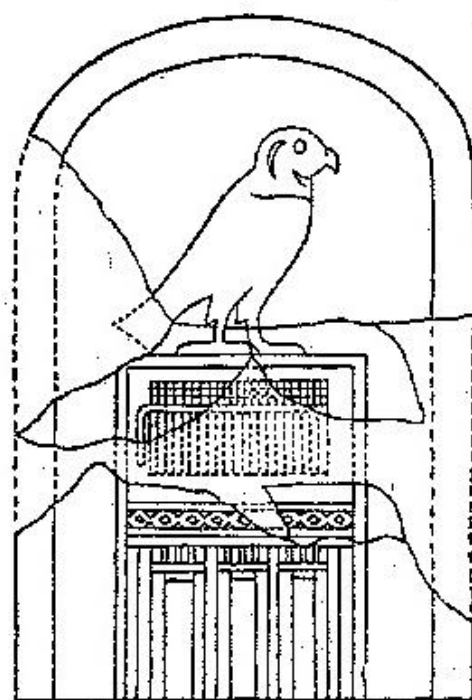


Fig. 26. The royal stela of Zer from Abydos

Nevertheless, it is more elaborate and shows a further advance in architectural development, principally in regard to the subterranean burial chamber and magazines, seven in number and cut to a greater depth. No enclosure walls or subsidiary burials were discovered round the tomb, but it is possible that they may have been destroyed by the building of later tombs. The over-all measurements of the tomb are 41.30 by 15.15 metres.

Another tomb of similar design and proportions was also discovered at Sakkara, and, from jar-sealings found in it, we may conclude that it too belongs to the period of Zer.

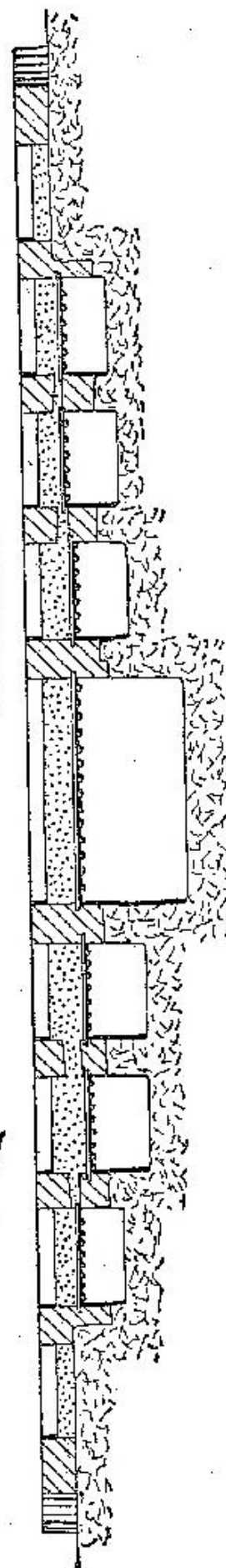
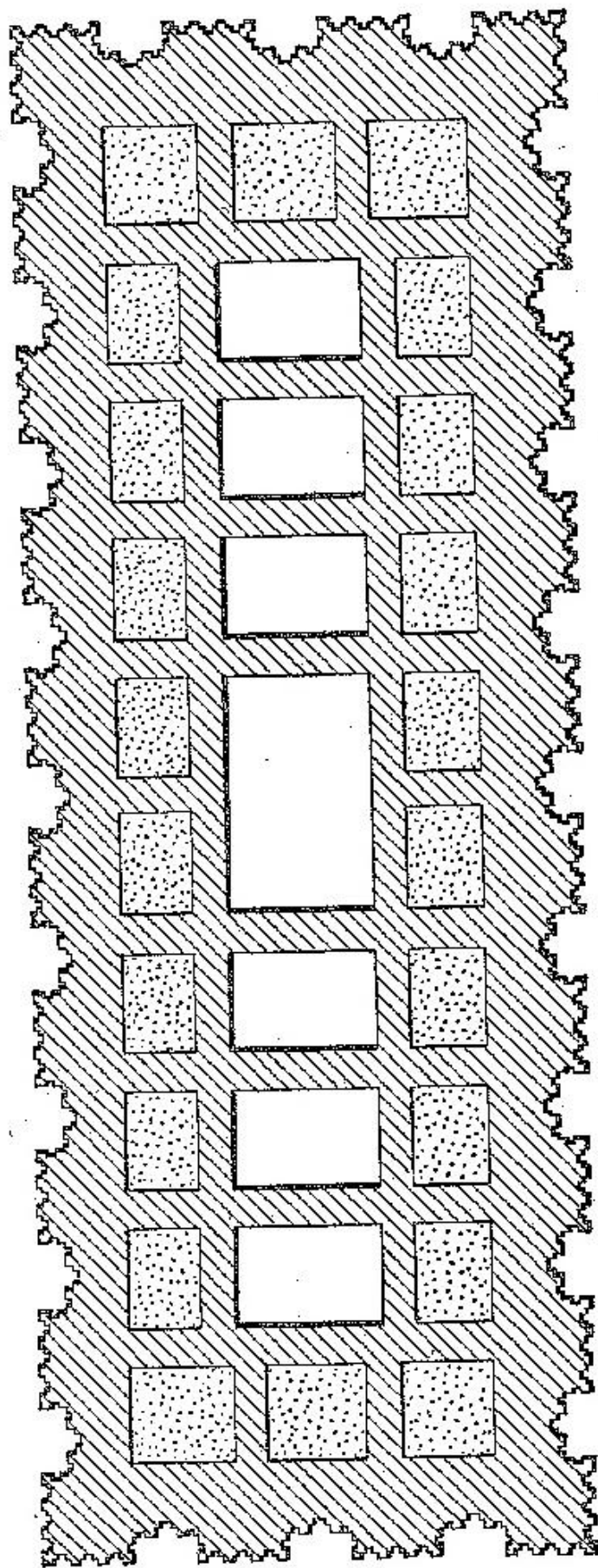


Fig. 27. Plan of Tomb 3471 at Sakkara.

*Queen Meryet-nit (Figure 28)*

The chronological position and status of Meryet-Nit is uncertain, but there is reason to suppose that she might be the successor of Zer and third sovereign of the dynasty. When Tomb Y at Abydos was excavated in 1900, Petrie found in it a large stela bearing the name of Meryet-nit alone, not surrounded by the enclosure of the conventional hawk name (Fig. 29). At that time it was believed that Meryet-nit was a

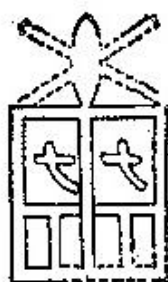


Fig. 28.  
Name of  
Meryet-nit

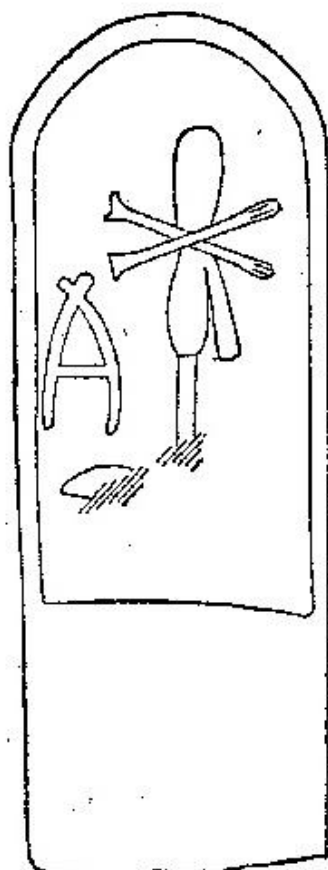


Fig. 29.  
Stela of Mer-  
yet-nit from  
Abydos

king, but later research has shown the name to be that of a woman and, to judge by the richness of the burial, a queen. Although her name appeared on stone vases found in the tomb, no jar-sealings of Meryet-nit were discovered, but many were found bearing the name of Udimu, the fifth king of the dynasty, and in consequence of this she has been wrongly recognized by some historians as his consort. Udimu's sealings are almost certainly intrusive, for his tomb is adjacent and



the scattering of such material was unfortunately a feature of Amélineau's excavations. However, recent excavations at Sakkara have revealed another tomb, apparently belonging to Meryet-nit, to judge from inscriptions on stone vessels and jar-sealings, some of which are identical with those found at Abydos and one apparently bearing her name in a *serech* surmounted by the crossed arrows of Nit, similar to the sealings of Nithotep from Nagadeh (Fig. 28).

The Sakkara tomb No. 3503 (Fig. 30) is much larger than the Abydos monument and, from its design and the objects found, it can be dated with certainty to the earlier part of the dynasty. Sealings of Zer were found in it and it would appear that he might well have been her predecessor. The superstructure of this tomb is identical with those of Hor-aha and Zer, situated near by, and the fact that alone among the royal ladies of the dynasty Meryet-nit is the only one to have great monuments both at Abydos and Sakkara adjacent to those of the kings suggests that she was more than a consort, but may herself have been a reigning monarch.

Her Abydos monument (Fig. 31) is one of the largest and best built of the group. It consists of a brick-lined pit divided by crossed walls into a big central burial chamber surrounded by eight magazines. The whole substructure originally had a wooden roof and the burial chamber a wooden floor. The over-all measurements, including the generally accepted restoration of the destroyed superstructure, are 19.2 by 16.3 metres. Surrounding the tomb are 41 subsidiary graves in which a few stelae, similar to those from the tomb of Zer, were found. The Sakkara tomb also had subsidiary burials surrounding the superstructure which has an over-all measurement of 42.6 by 16 metres. These graves were of great interest, for many of them were found undisturbed, containing the bodies of sacrificed servants buried with objects denoting their particular service to their royal mistress, such as

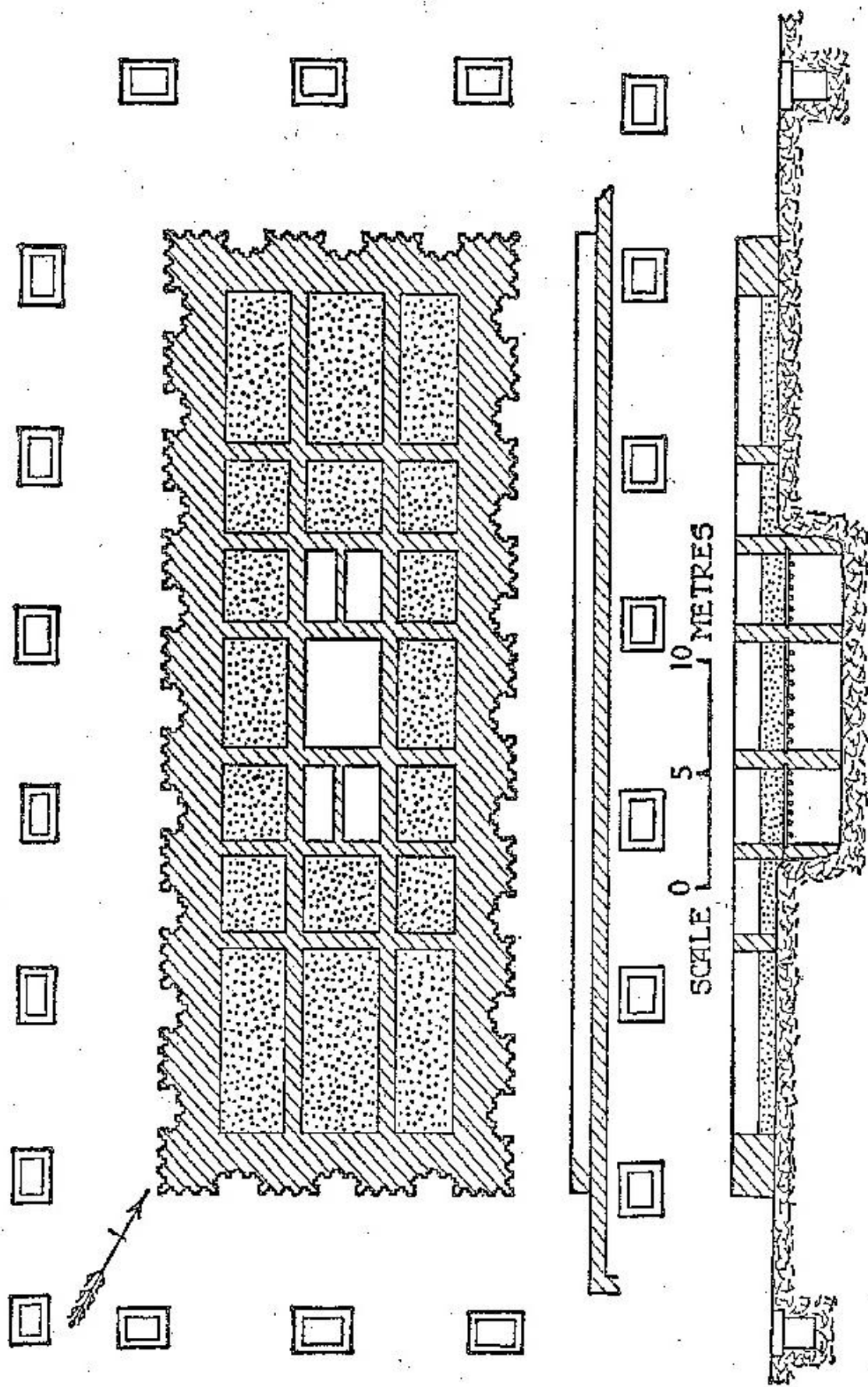


Fig. 30. Plan of Tomb 3503 at Sakkara

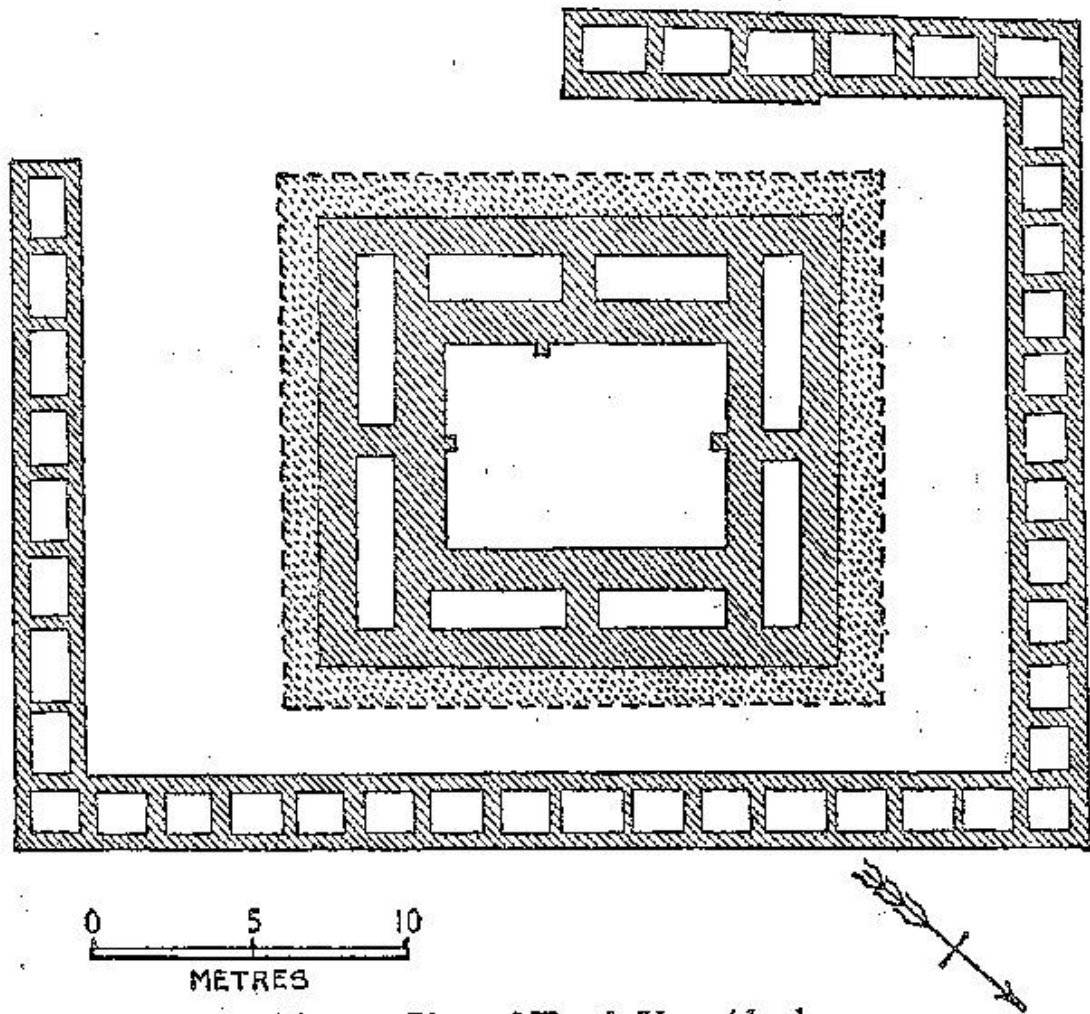


Fig. 31. Plan of Tomb Y at Abydos

model boats with her shipmaster, paint pots with her artist, stone vessels and copper tools with her vase maker, pots of every type with her potter; etc.

Like Hor-aha, the queen had a boat-grave of brick built on the north side of her tomb which originally contained a solar bark 17.75 metres long, in which her spirit would travel with the Sun God.

Apart from the two tombs at Abydos and Sakkara, a further group of seventy-seven graves of Meryet-nit's servants arranged in orderly rows round three sides of a rectangle was found at Abydos. Similar rectangles of servants' burials of the kings Zer and Uadji are nearby. The meaning of these curious cemeteries has not yet been satisfactorily explained, but it has been suggested that the burials were arranged

around great buildings which have totally disappeared. However this may be, it is significant that again we have a monument to Meryet-nit of equal size and adjacent to those of the kings. From her name Meryet-nit (Nit is victorious) we may judge that, like Queen Nithotep, she was a princess of the North and therefore a powerful factor in the political balance following the unification which at that early date of its inception must have been precarious. As we have already noted, it was not only held together by right of conquest but also by matrimonial union.

### *Uadji (Figure 32)*

Assuming that Meryet-nit was a reigning monarch either just before or immediately after Zer, Uadji would be the fourth king of the dynasty. It would appear probable, from the evidence on an inscribed label from Sakkara, that his *Nebti* name was Iterty, a name which might be identified with either of the second, third, and fourth names on the Abydos king list. Iterty would also appear to be the same as Manetho's Athothis whom he lists as second king of the dynasty; an impossible position for Uadji, who certainly came after both Zer and Meryet-nit. The name of Uadji has been found on rough rock in the Eastern Desert south of Edfu, marking some expedition to the mines and perhaps to the Red Sea coast. The advance in architectural and artistic achievement continued in his reign and although his southern tomb at Abydos shows little development from that of his immediate predecessors, a great tomb, probably his, and recently discovered at Sakkara, shows a very definite step forward in both design and building technique.

The funerary stela of Uadji was discovered in the tomb at Abydos, and this monument may be considered the first great



Fig. 32.  
Horus name  
of Uadji



## ARCHAIC EGYPT

work of Egyptian art extant. It shows a perfection of design and craftsmanship which was hardly excelled in later and more sophisticated times and it is now one of the greatest treasures of the Egyptian collection in the Louvre (Pl. 2b). The northern tomb at Sakkara also yielded objects of considerable artistic merit, principally of carved wood and ivory furniture and gaming pieces. A certain Sekhem Ka appears to have been an important official at this time and his name appears frequently with that of the king on objects found in the Sakkara monument.

Uadji's southern tomb at Abydos (Fig. 33) consists of a large pit in which were the remains of a wooden burial chamber flanked on three sides with a series of brick-built magazines. With the superstructure restored the tomb has an

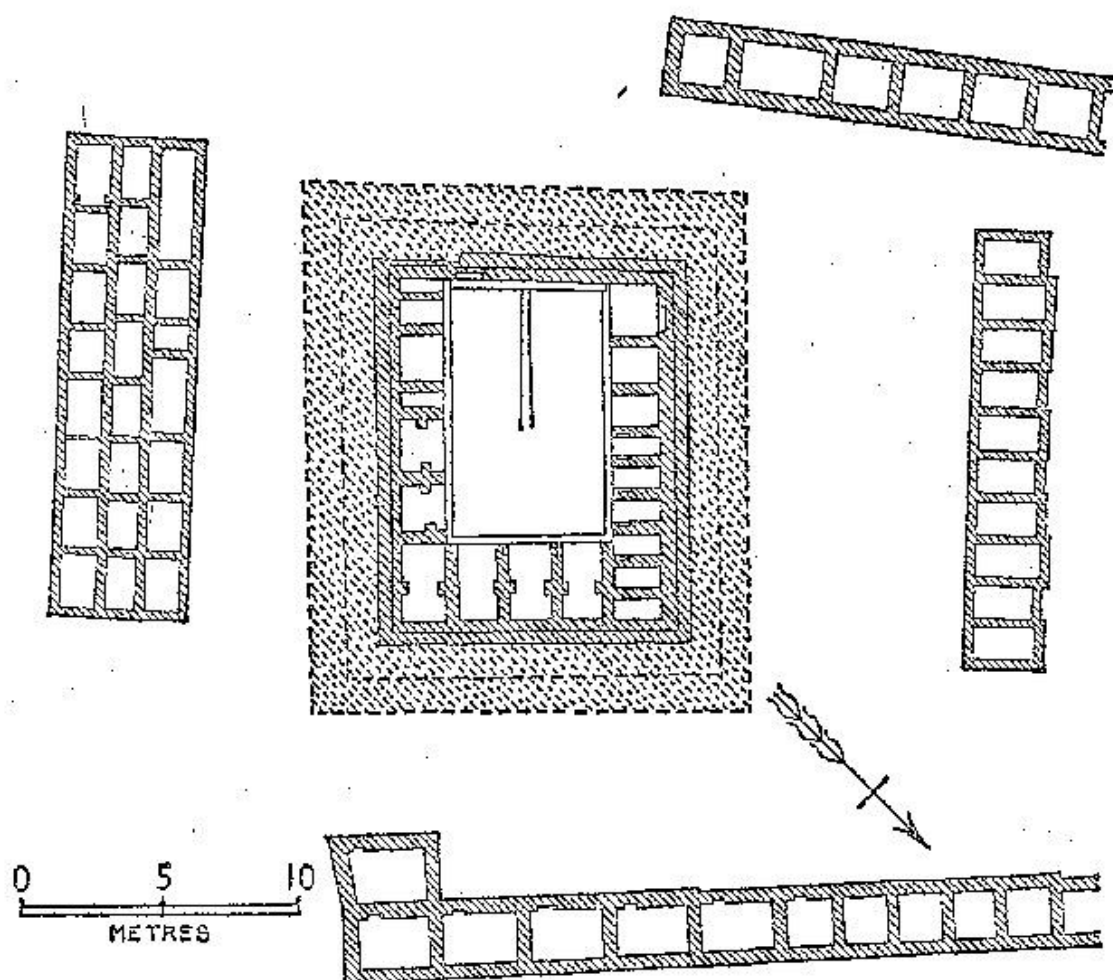
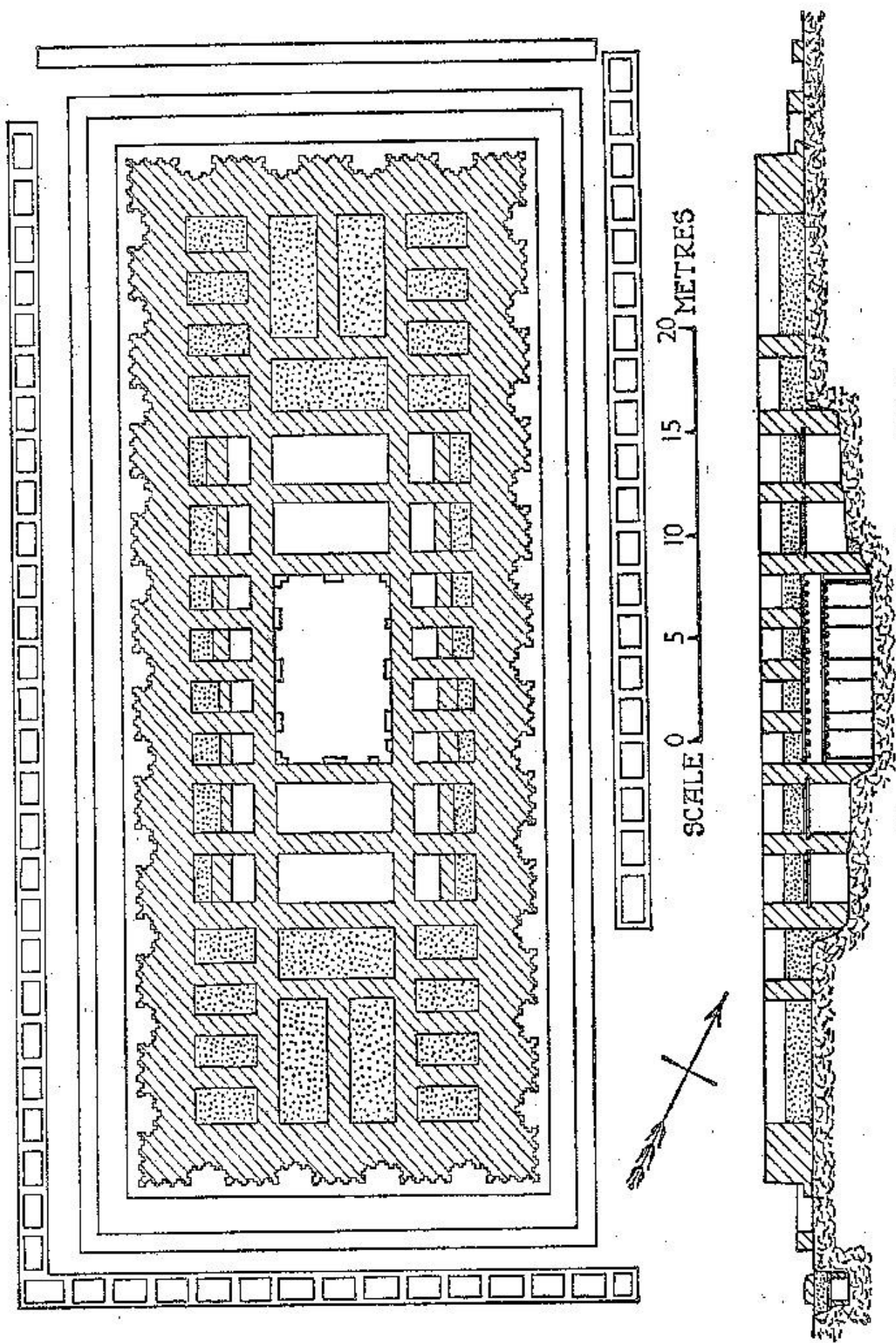


Fig. 33. Plan of Tomb Z at Abydos



over-all measurement of 19 by 15 metres and it was surrounded by 174 burials of the sacrificed royal retainers from which about twenty of the usual crude private stelae were recovered. Like Queen Meryet-nit, Uadji had a great rectangle of servant burials, 161 in number, in the lower ground at Abydos.

The great tomb, No. 3504, at Sakkara (Figs. 34 and 35) would appear to be his northern burial, although the frequency of the name of the great official Sekhem Ka on objects found in it makes it a possibility that the tomb is his and not the king's. However, it is almost impossible to imagine that a nobleman, no matter how great, should have a tomb far superior to that of his master; for the monument is nearly twice as large as the tomb at Abydos. The general design of the structure is a development of the type of tomb built at Sakkara during the reigns of Hor-aha and Zer, but apart from this, it is considerably bigger, with an over-all measurement of 56.45 by 25.45 metres. The substructure consists of a large pit cut below ground level and divided by cross walls into five rooms, the central one being for the burial and being originally panelled with wood inlaid with strips of gold plate. These five rooms have a series of magazines built on the eastern and western sides, and the whole substructure, burial chambers and subsidiary rooms, was roofed with timber. The vast superstructure above was hollow and divided into forty-five magazines, and the outside was embellished with the usual recessed panelling. A feature of the superstructure not previously found in other tombs of the First Dynasty was a low bench surrounding it, on which was arranged a series of approximately 300 bulls' heads modelled in clay with real horns (Pls. 8 and 9). Outside the enclosure wall which surrounded the tomb were sixty-two slave burials, each grave having its own superstructure. Like nearly all the other royal tombs of the First Dynasty, the burial chamber and



Figs. 34 and 35. Plan and Section of Tomb 3504 at Sakkara

other subterranean rooms had been destroyed by fire, but in this case the destroyed area had been restored by Ka'a, last king of the dynasty. The question of the destruction of the royal burials by fire is of particular interest and will be discussed later in this historical outline.

Another great tomb of Uadji's reign, much destroyed but nearly as large as the one at Sakkara, was discovered at Giza and it is possible that this belonged to his consort, whose name is unknown. This, like the monuments at Sakkara and Abydos, was surrounded by the graves of sacrificed servants. According to Manetho, the fourth king, whom he calls Uenephes, reigned twenty-three years (Africanus) or forty-two years (Eusebius). The Egyptian historian relates that during the reign of this king Egypt suffered from a great famine and that he built a pyramid near Kochimi, an area now identified with the modern Sakkara.

### *Udimu (Figure 36)*

With the accession of Uadji's successor, Udimu, historical documents and material become more explicit and more factual evidence is forthcoming. For example, the order of Udimu and his successors in the First Dynasty is confirmed by a stone vase inscription found in the Step Pyramid at Sakkara. On this important fragment are engraved the secondary names of Udimu, Enezib, Semerkhet, and Ka'a — in the accepted order. Unlike his predecessors, Udimu's *Nesu-bit* name of Semti is known, and through this we can identify him with Hesepti of the Abydos list and with Manetho's Usaphaidos who, he tells us, reigned for twenty years. Numerous inscribed labels and jar-sealings give records of events, some of which appear to be repeated in the year list concerning an unknown king on the Palermo Stone, and we



Fig. 36.  
Horus name  
of Udimu

may perhaps conclude that these short historical records, written in the Fifth Dynasty, refer to the reign of Udimu. The chief events of fourteen years are recorded and from their position on the stone it would appear that they belong to the latter half of the reign. The year  $X + 2$  records the defeat of the Bedouins, and an ivory label from Abydos shows Udimu in the conventional pose of a conquering Pharaoh clubbing a chief of these barbarians, with the legend 'First time of the striking of the East'. War against the inhabitants of the Eastern Desert was necessary to safeguard the trade routes through the Wadi Maghara for the importation of the all-important copper and malachite from the mines of Sinai.

Year  $X + 3$  records festivals called the 'Appearance of the King of Upper Egypt' and the 'Appearance of the King of Lower Egypt' and the celebration of the King's jubilee, which was known as the *Sed*. This festival was a survival of a time when the monarch was not allowed to reign for a longer period than thirty years, but by the time of the First Dynasty it had developed into a jubilee and magical ceremony in which the king was rejuvenated and continued to reign (see page 108). Another label from Abydos and a clay sealing from Sakkara also record these events.

Year  $X + 4$  records that a census was taken of all the people of the provinces of the west, north, and east, and year  $X + 5$  mentions the second occurrence of the Feast of the goddess Wadjet, the patron deity of Buto, one of the principal cities of Lower Egypt.

Years  $X + 6$  and 7 record the designing and laying of the foundations of a palace or temple called 'Thrones-of-the-Gods', and in the year  $X + 8$  there is mention of the opening of a lake attached to this building. There is also record in this year of the shooting of the hippopotamus, a happening of considerable importance which appears to be also recorded on a jar-sealing found at Abydos.



## THE UNIFICATION

Year X + 9 records residence, presumably of the king, at the lake of the god Harsaphes at Heracleopolis; this also appears to be recorded on a label from Abydos on which the shrine of the deity is portrayed.

Year X + 10 records the military destruction of an unidentified locality called Werka, and year X + 11 is marked by the festival called the Birth of the god Sed.

Year X + 12 records the festival called the 'Appearance of the King of Lower Egypt' and the 'First occurrence of the Running of Apis'. This latter event is of considerable interest, for we find it portrayed on a jar-sealing from Sakkara. The ceremony of the 'Running of Apis' appears to have been a fertility rite which was closely associated with the Sed festival (see Chapter 2).

Years X + 13 and 14 record festivals of the birth of the gods Seshat and Mefdet and the appearance of the king of Upper Egypt.

Unfortunately, the Palermo fragment ends at this point and gives no clue to either the beginning or the end of the reign.

We see in Udimu's reign a further advance in arts and crafts and ample evidence of a highly civilized state under well-organized government. In this government a great noble named Hemaka undoubtedly played an important part, for he was the chancellor who stood in high favour, bearing the title of 'ruling in the King's heart'. The name of this great noble appears frequently on labels (Fig. 37) and jar-sealings (Fig. 116) from both Abydos and Sakkara, as well as the name of another great official of the period called Ankhka. A great tomb, discovered at Sakkara in 1935, was then thought to have been the burial place of Hemaka, but recent discoveries in another large tomb at Sakkara have shown that this identification was almost certainly wrong and we must now consider it probable that this great monument





Fig. 37. Wooden label of Udimu from Abydos

(No. 3035, Fig. 38) was not the tomb of the chancellor but the northern sepulchre of Udimu. However this may be, it is the greatest monument we have belonging to this reign, far exceeding in size the southern tomb of the king at Abydos. The tomb, with an over-all measurement of 57.3 by 26 metres, consists of a substructure of three rock-cut rooms opening from a great open pit originally roofed with timber (Fig. 39). Access to the substructure was gained through a descending subterranean stairway which was blocked at intervals with stone portcullises, which were lowered after the burial. Above is a rectangular brick superstructure containing forty-five magazines with the exterior walls built with the usual recessed panelling. Some of these magazines had escaped the attention of ancient plunderers and were discovered intact with a mass of objects which had lain untouched for 5000 years. Tools, weapons, games, and vessels of crystal, alabaster, and schist were found in abundance and they now form the largest single collection of archaic objects ever discovered.

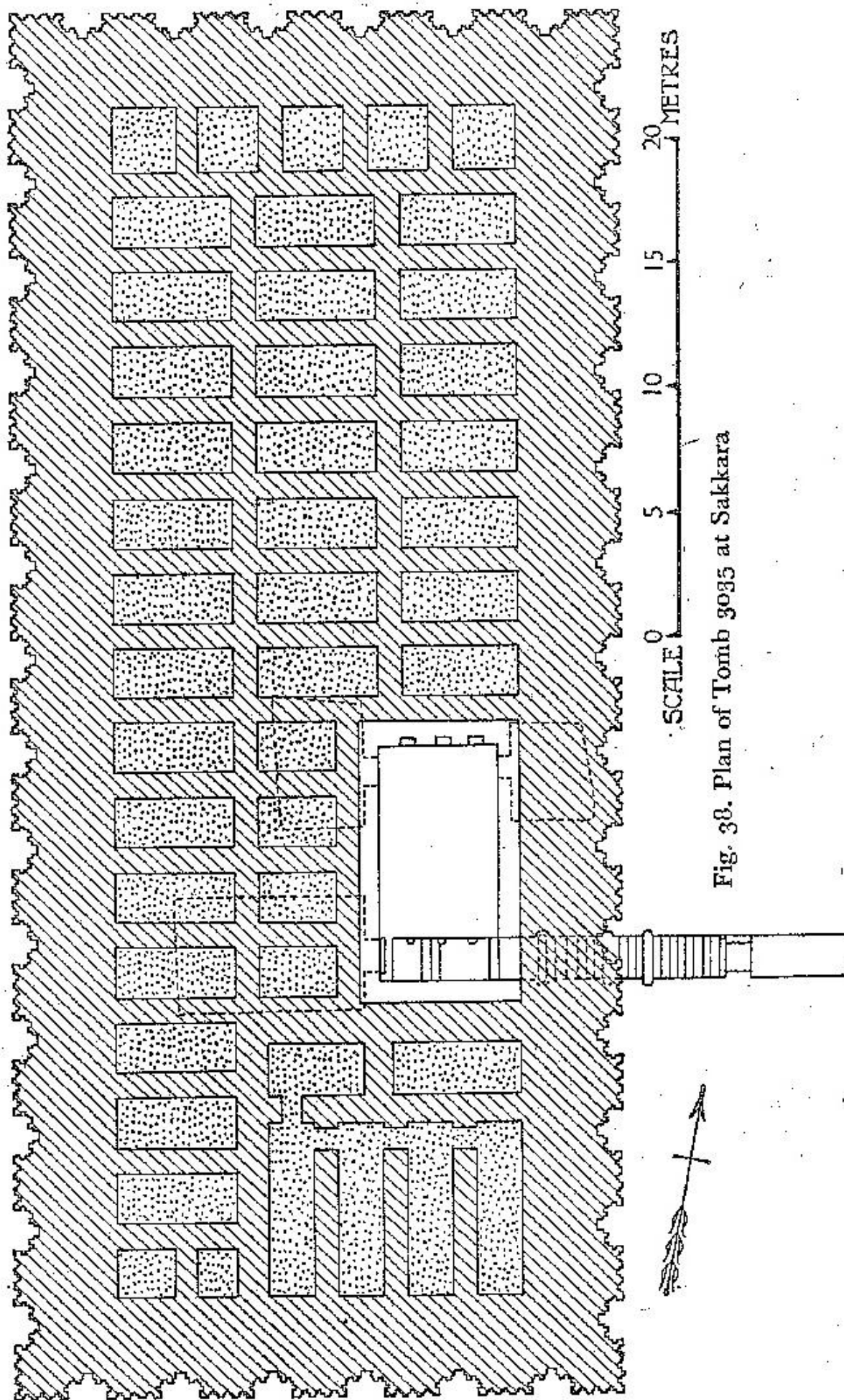


Fig. 38. Plan of Tomb 3035 at Sakkara

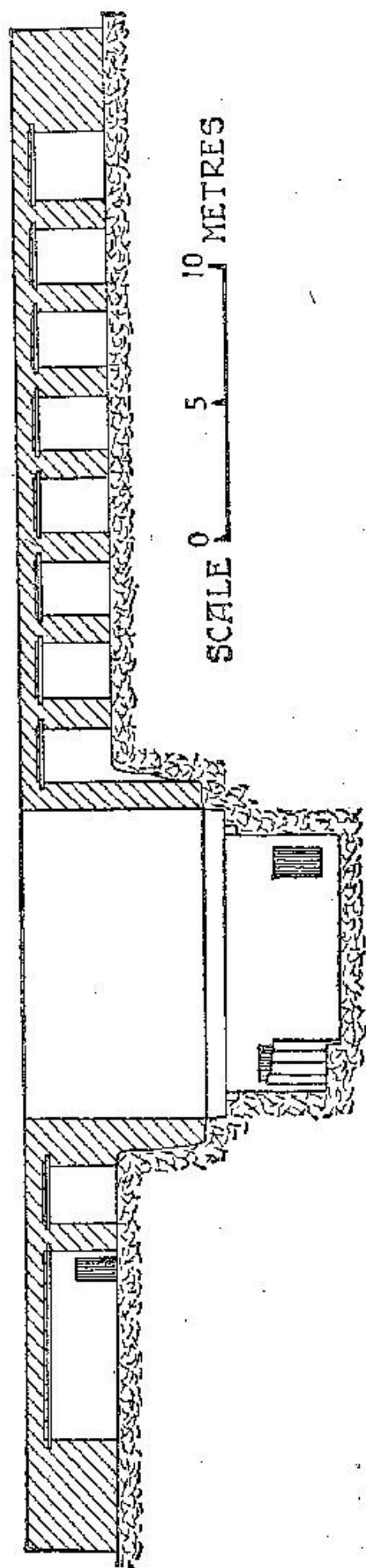


Fig. 39. Section of Tomb 3035 at Sakkara

## THE UNIFICATION

Udimu's tomb at Abydos (Fig. 40), although much smaller than the Sakkara monument, yet shows a great architectural advance and in comparison with the tombs of the previous kings, is a most impressive structure. Like the Sakkara tomb,

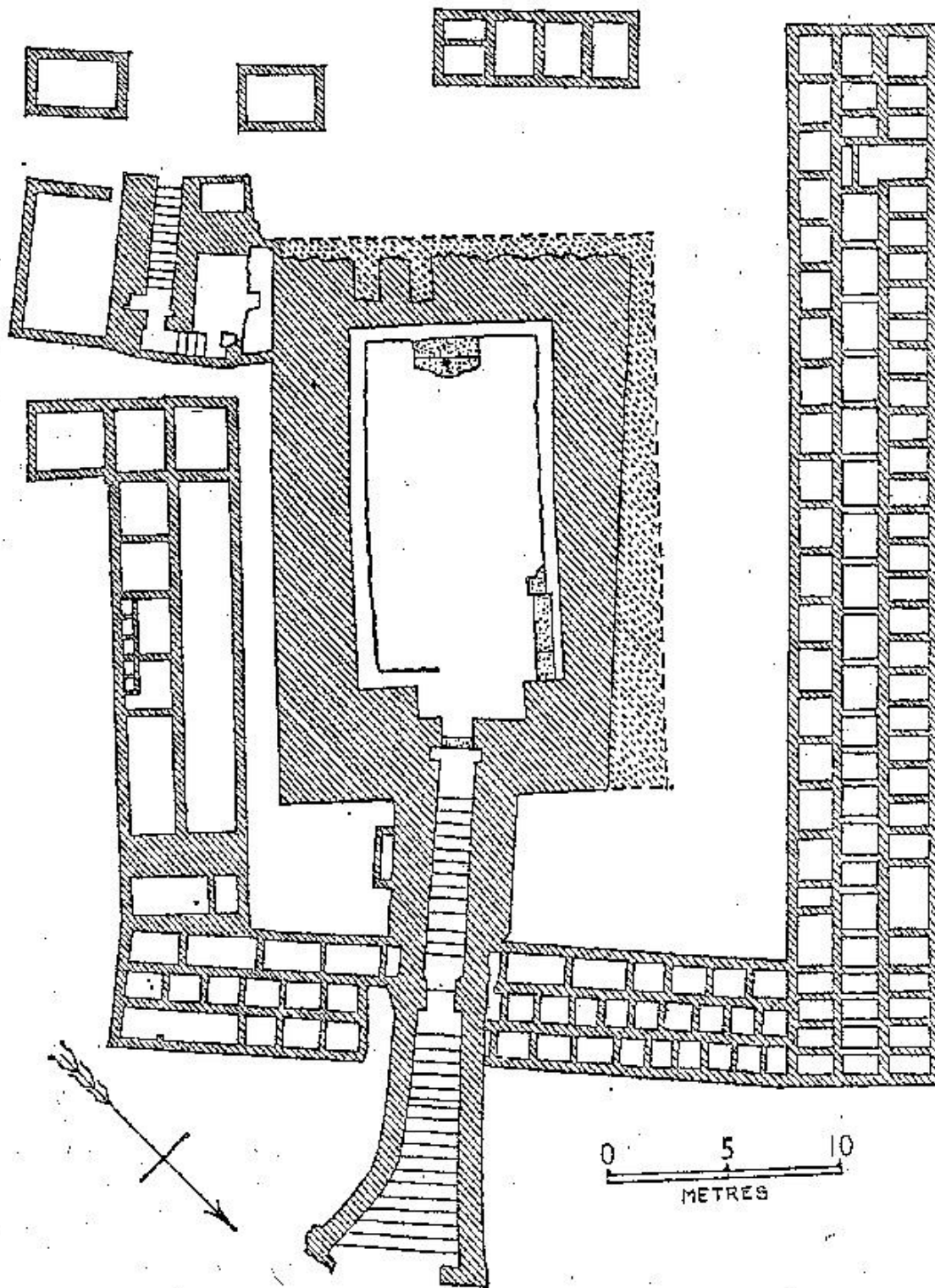


Fig. 40. Plan of Tomb T at Abydos



it has a stairway leading down to a great pit originally roofed with timber and floored with blocks of granite. The superstructure has totally disappeared, but it probably had an over-all measurement of 23.5 by 16.4 metres. Approximately 136 slave burials surround the tomb and from these, which contained the bodies of both men and women, many of the usual crude stelae were recovered. Jar-sealings of Udimu were found in the tomb of the supposed queen of Zer, Her-nit, and there is no doubt that she was buried during his reign.

The reign of Udimu appears to have been the most prosperous of the whole of the First Dynasty, and the memory of the great king was not forgotten in later times. The Ebers medical papyrus records a prescription which was reputed to belong to his time, 1500 years before, and Chapter 64 of the Book of the Dead was attributed to his reign. One of the most notable objects recovered from the Abydos tomb is the lid of an ivory box which must have originally kept his gold seal of judgement, for it is so inscribed.

### *Enezib (Figure 41)*

Udimu was succeeded by Enezib, whose *nesu-bit* name was Merbapen and therefore to be identified with Miebidos of Manetho, according to whom he reigned twenty-six years. Enezib was the first king mentioned in the Sakkara king list, and from this we may perhaps conclude that he was the first Thinite monarch to be recognized as legitimate by Lower Egypt. It is significant that his name, inscribed on stone vessels, has frequently been erased by his successor Semerkhet, who in his turn has been omitted in the Sakkara list; all of which suggests a dynastic struggle between rival claimants who received support, one from Upper and one from Lower Egypt. However, a definite split in the unity of the two lands



Fig. 41.  
Horus name  
of Enezib



## THE UNIFICATION

does not appear to have occurred, at least during Enezib's reign, for two tombs exist, one certainly belonging to him at Abydos, and the other, of his reign and probably his burial place, at Sakkara. But, even so, it is significant that his tomb at Abydos is the smallest and most poorly built in the whole group and even the Sakkara monument, although elaborate in design and construction, is considerably smaller than other tombs of this character in this area. The Abydos tomb con-

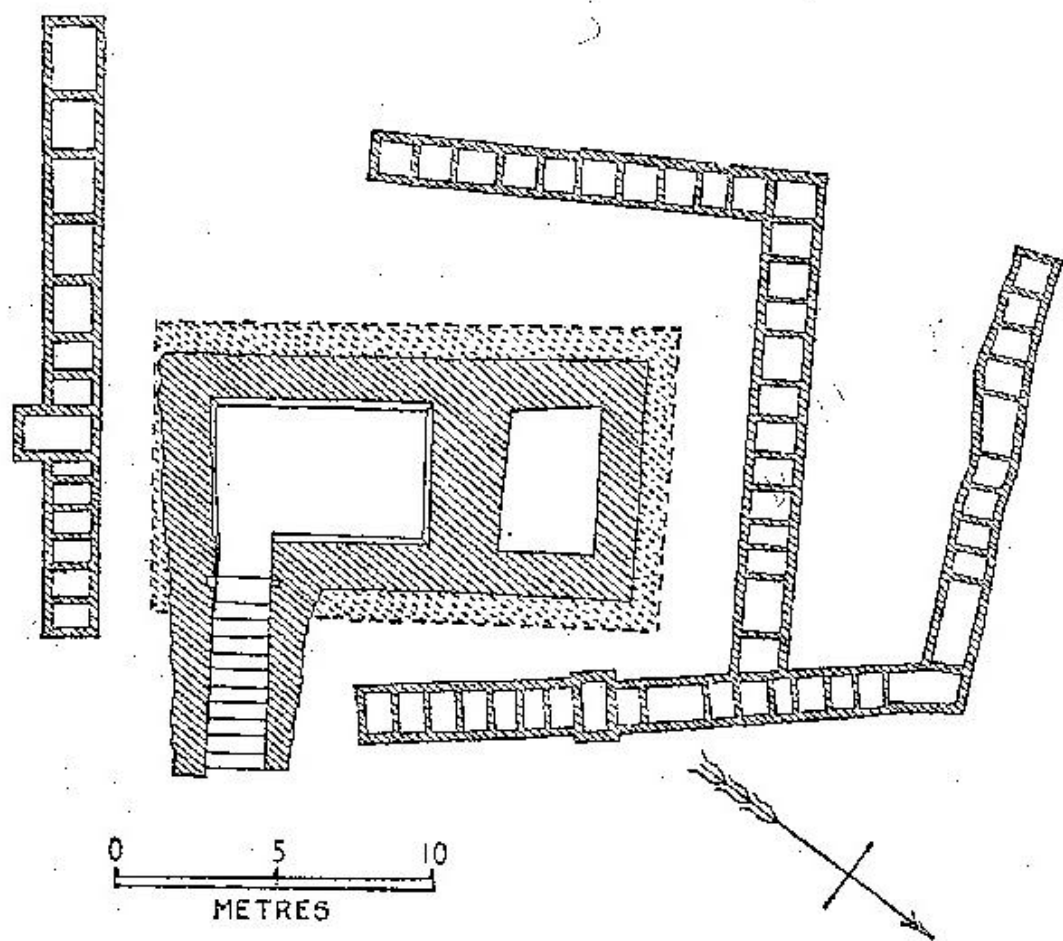


Fig. 42. Plan of Tomb X at Abydos

sists of a brick-lined pit divided by a cross wall into two rooms, approached by a stairway descending into the main chamber from the east (Fig. 42). The burial chamber was originally floored, walled, and roofed with timber. The overall measurements of the tomb, including the restored superstructure, are 16.4 by 9 metres. Surrounding the main structure are sixty-four poorly built graves for the sacrificed retainers.

## ARCHAIC EGYPT

The Sakkara tomb, No. 3038 (Figs. 43, 44, and 45) presents some very interesting and significant architectural features which so far have not been preserved in any other monument of the period. The building is dated to Enezib, and, although the name of an official called Nebitka occurs on jar-sealings, etc., it would appear probable that it is the burial place of the king. When first excavated, the superstructure of the tomb appeared to follow the familiar design of a rectangular platform, with its exterior decorated with recessed panelling. But further digging revealed a stepped pyramid structure hidden within it (Fig. 43). Only the lower part of the stepped structure was preserved and it is possible that it continued upwards in a pure pyramid form. The tomb of Queen Her-nit

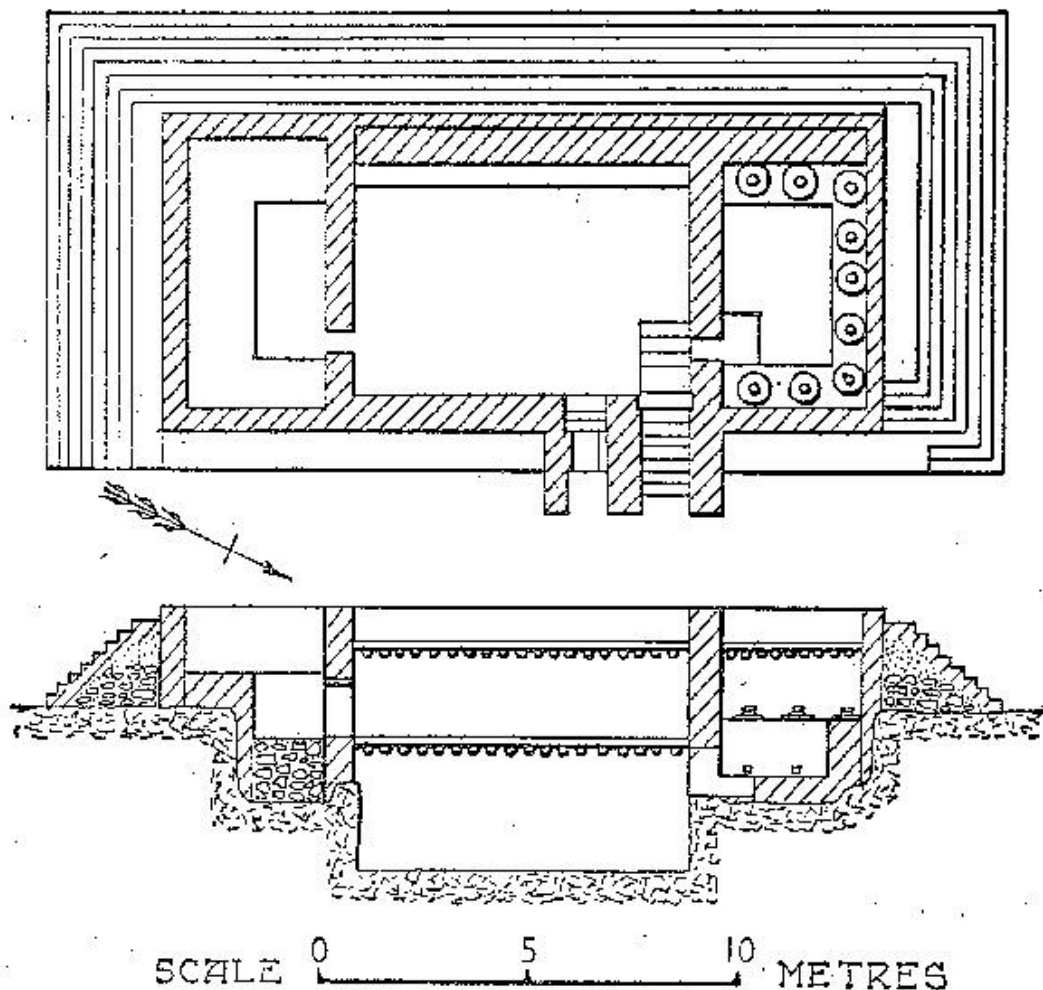


Fig. 43. Plan of first design of Tomb 3038 at Sakkara

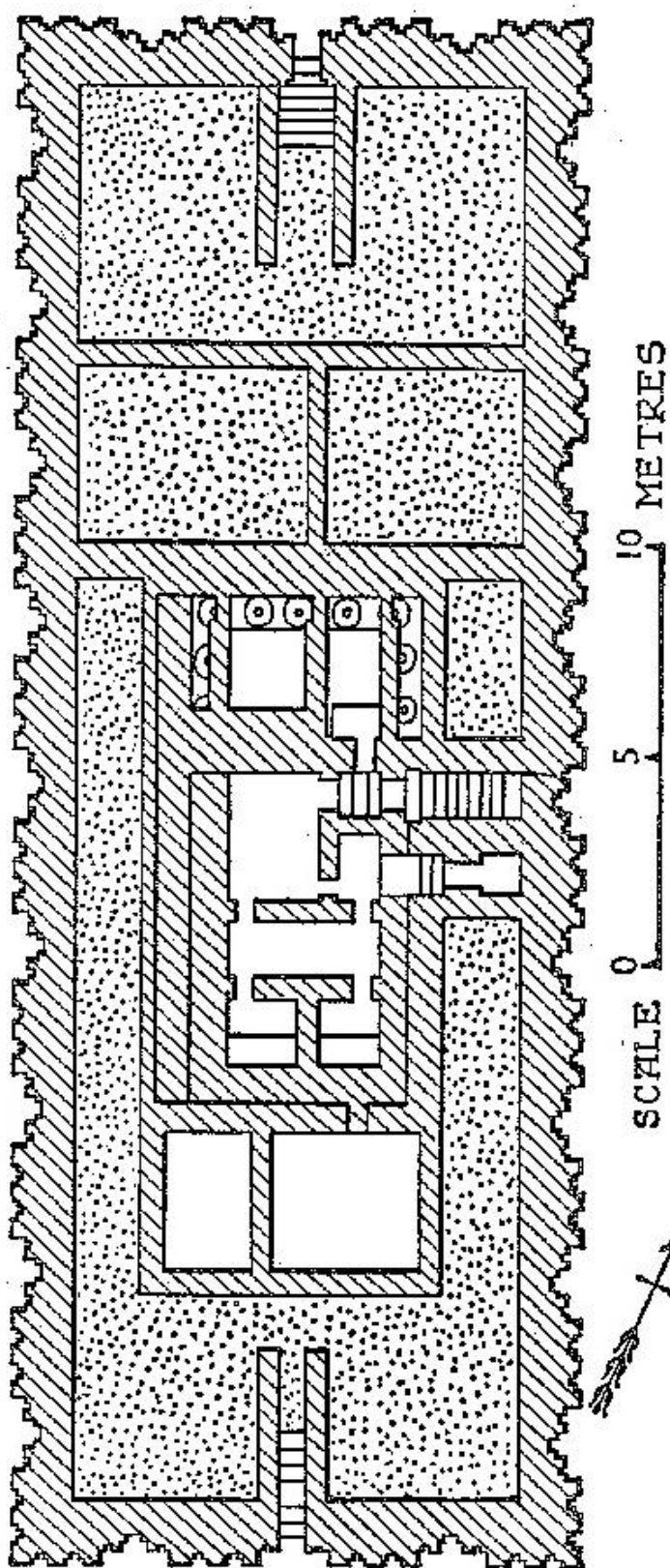


Fig. 44. Plan of second design of Tomb 3038 at Sakkara

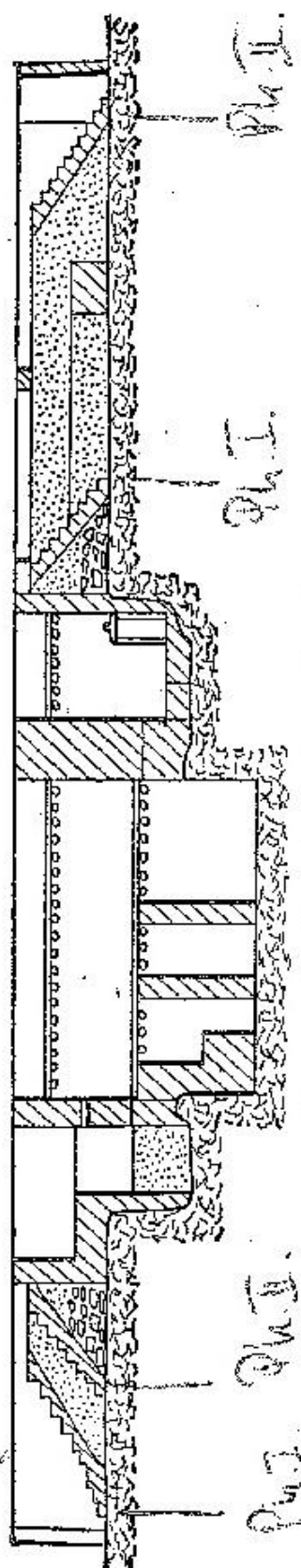


Fig. 45. Section of Tomb 3038 at Sakkara

at Sakkara was found to have a similar feature, although of a more primitive character, which takes the form of a rectangular earthen tumulus faced with brickwork, an obvious prototype of Enezib's interior superstructure. Traces of this earthen tumulus have been found in other tombs at Sakkara and indeed there is reason to suppose that its descendant, the stepped brick structure, was a customary feature of most of the big northern tombs of the latter half of the dynasty. The reason for the concealment of one form of design within another of radically different conception is puzzling, but I think the probable explanation is that it represents the combination of the superstructure designs of Upper and Lower Egypt in the one building: the tumulus or stepped structure of the south and the rectangular panelled structure of the north. The possible influence of this strange architectural feature on the evolution of pyramid design is dealt with in Chapter 4 (see page 145). Another unusual feature of Enezib's northern tomb is the double entrance stairways, one to the subterranean burial chambers and the other to a room above it, and a granary with built-in corn bins.

The over-all measurement of the monument is 37 by 13.85 metres.

### *Semerkheth (Figure 46)*

Some authorities have suggested that Semerkhet was a usurper, but beyond his erasure of the name of his predecessor on stone vases and the omission of his name on the Sakkara list, there is no concrete evidence of this. However, his reign would appear to have been unsettled, for with his *nebti* and *nesu-bit* names of Semenptah, he can certainly be identified with Manetho's Semempses, of whom it is recorded that in his reign 'there were many portents and a very great calamity'. Manetho estimates his reign as eighteen years, but the Cairo fragment of the Palermo Stone gives him only nine



## THE UNIFICATION

years. Until recently it was believed that a large rock tablet in the Wadi-Maghara in Sinai commemorated victories of Semerkhet in an invasion of that country. But the name on the monument has now been identified as Sekhemkhet, a king of the early Third Dynasty whose unfinished pyramid was discovered at Sak-kara in 1954. So far no monument of Semerkhet has been found at Sakkara, but his tomb at Abydos (Fig. 47) is far superior to that of his predecessor Enezib. It consists of a brick-lined subterranean burial chamber entered from the east by a sloping passage. Originally roofed with timber, the tomb is surrounded with regular, well-built graves for the royal retainers. It would appear probable that the superstructure covered not only the burial chamber but also the subsidiary graves, and its over-all measurement would be approximately 29.2 by 20.8 metres. A great stela of black quartzose stone

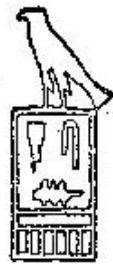


Fig. 46.

Horus name  
of Semerk-  
het

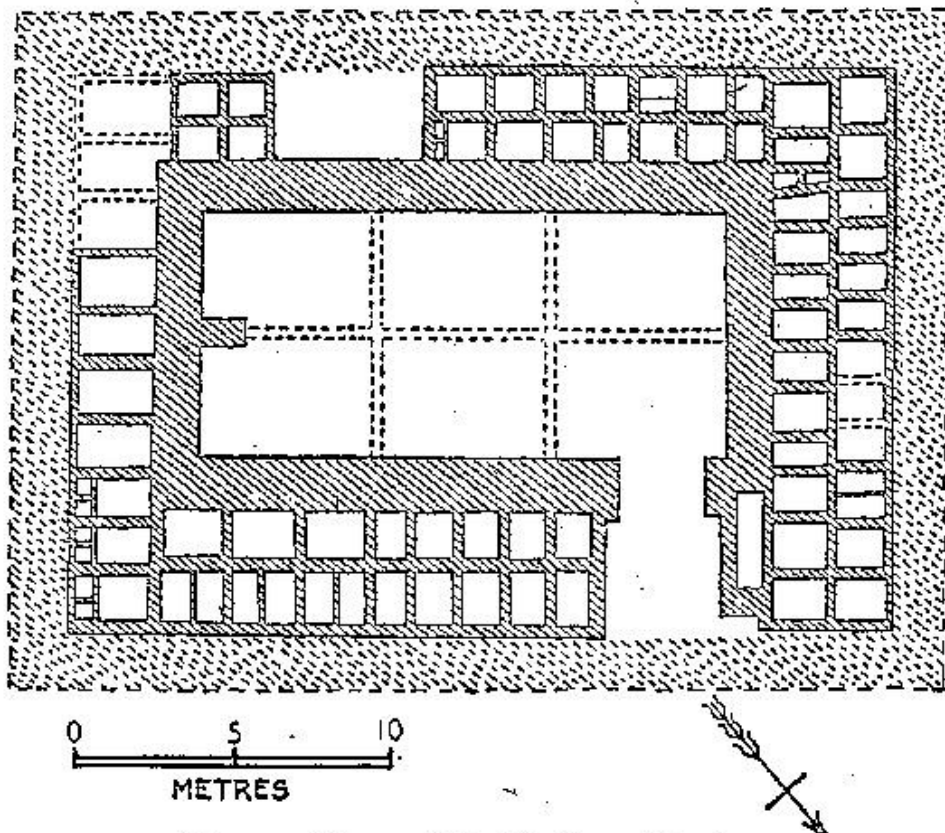


Fig. 47. Plan of Tomb U at Abydos



bearing the king's hawk name was found in the tomb (Fig. 48). On ivory tablets from Semerkhet's tomb there appears the name of a certain Henuka, whom we may judge to have been a senior official both during his reign and that of his successor (Fig. 49).

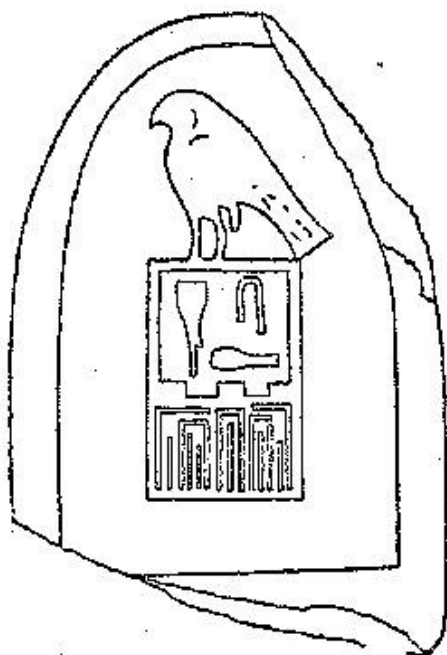


Fig. 48. Stela of Semerkhet from Abydos

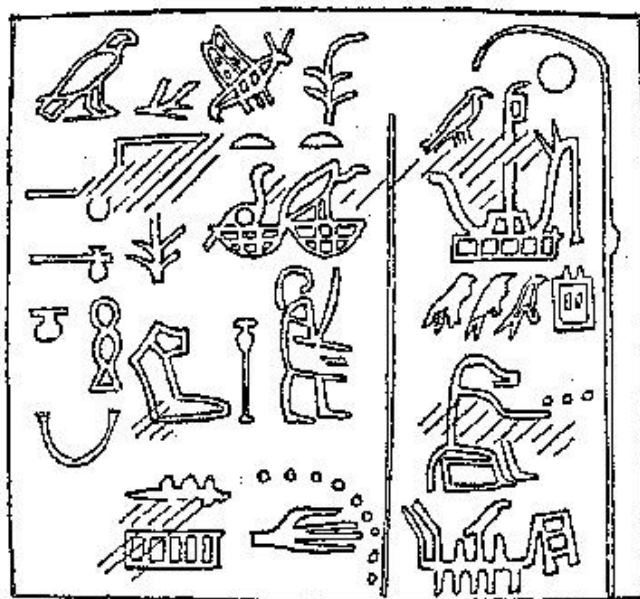


Fig. 49. Ivory label of Semerkhet from Abydos

### *Ka'a (Figure 50)*

After his short reign, Semerkhet was apparently succeeded by Ka'a, who may perhaps be identified with the Kebhu of the Abydos list. Manetho gives the name Bien-eches as the last king of the dynasty, who, he states, reigned for twenty-six years; but there is no evidence to support any identification of this individual with Ka'a and it would appear possible that the Egyptian historian is at fault in at least the name, although he may have been correct in his recording of the length of the reign.



Fig. 50.

of Ka'a

Progress in architectural design is very marked during this period and, apart from his southern tomb or cenotaph at Abydos, four large monuments of the reign of

## THE UNIFICATION

Ka'a have been recently discovered at Sakkara, one of which, No. 3505, is almost certainly his actual burial place.

The king's tomb at Abydos (Fig. 51) is a more elaborate structure than those of his predecessors and the general design of the substructure corresponds closely with buildings of the same period at Sakkara. This consists of a deep rectangular pit with an entrance stairway descending from the north-west. On each side of the stairway are two magazines and both these and the burial chamber within the pit were originally roofed with timber. Surrounding the nucleus structure are more magazines and twenty-six subsidiary graves for retainers, all with higher floor levels than the burial chamber and stairway. There is reason to believe that the destroyed superstructure originally covered the whole tomb,

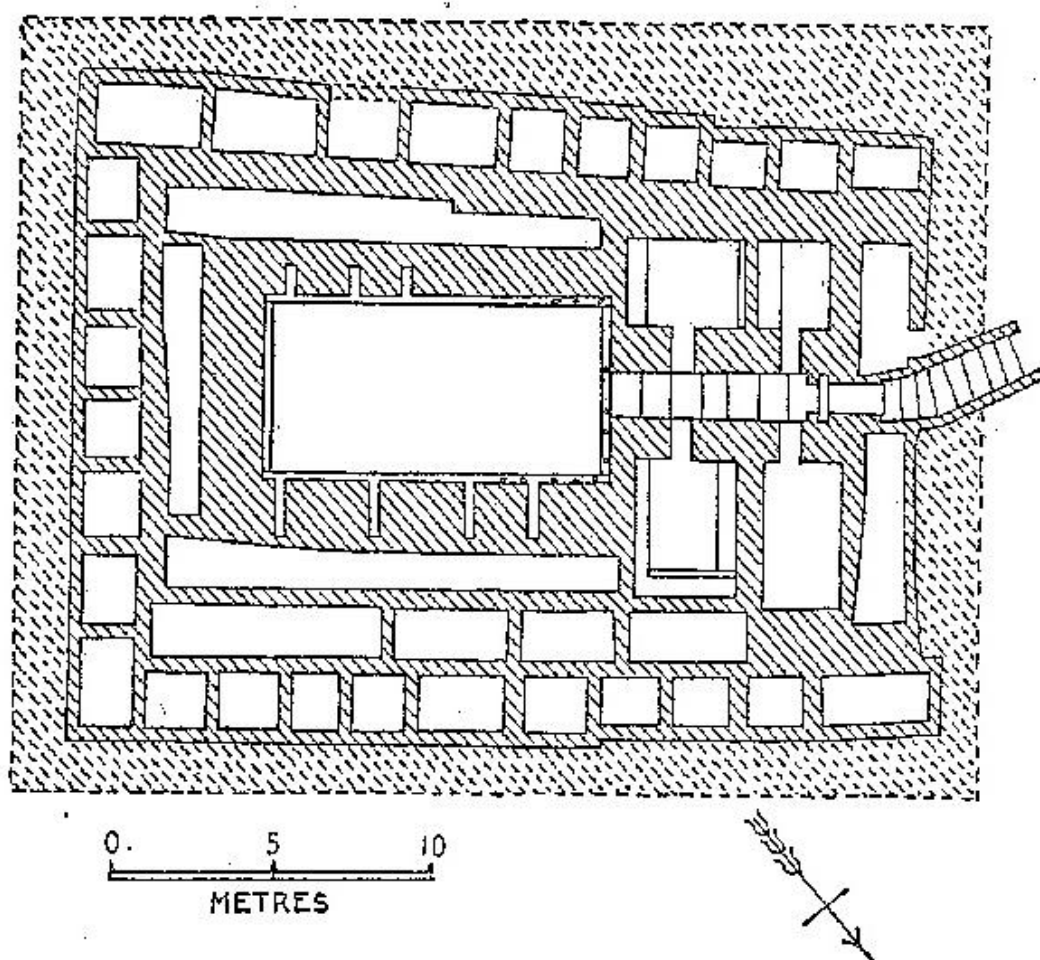


Fig. 51. Plan of Tomb Q at Abydos

measuring approximately 30 by 23 metres. Apart from jar-sealings and labels the monument can be identified by the discovery of the remains of two stelae on the east side of the structure, both of which bore his hawk name Ka'a (Fig. 52).

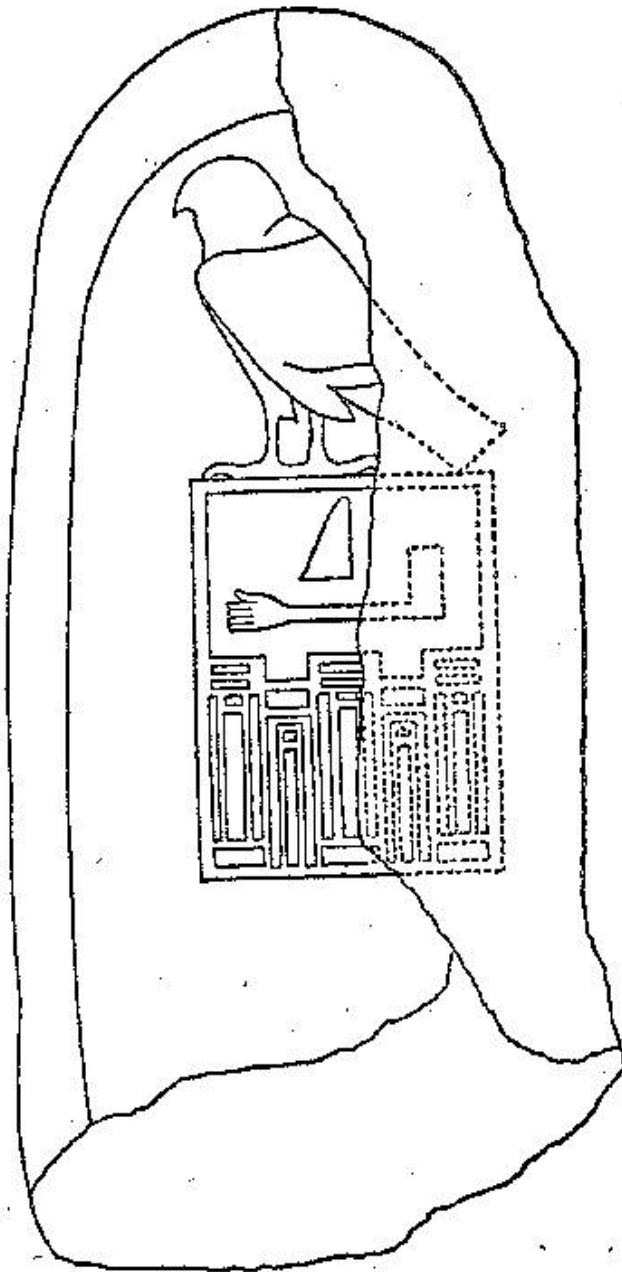
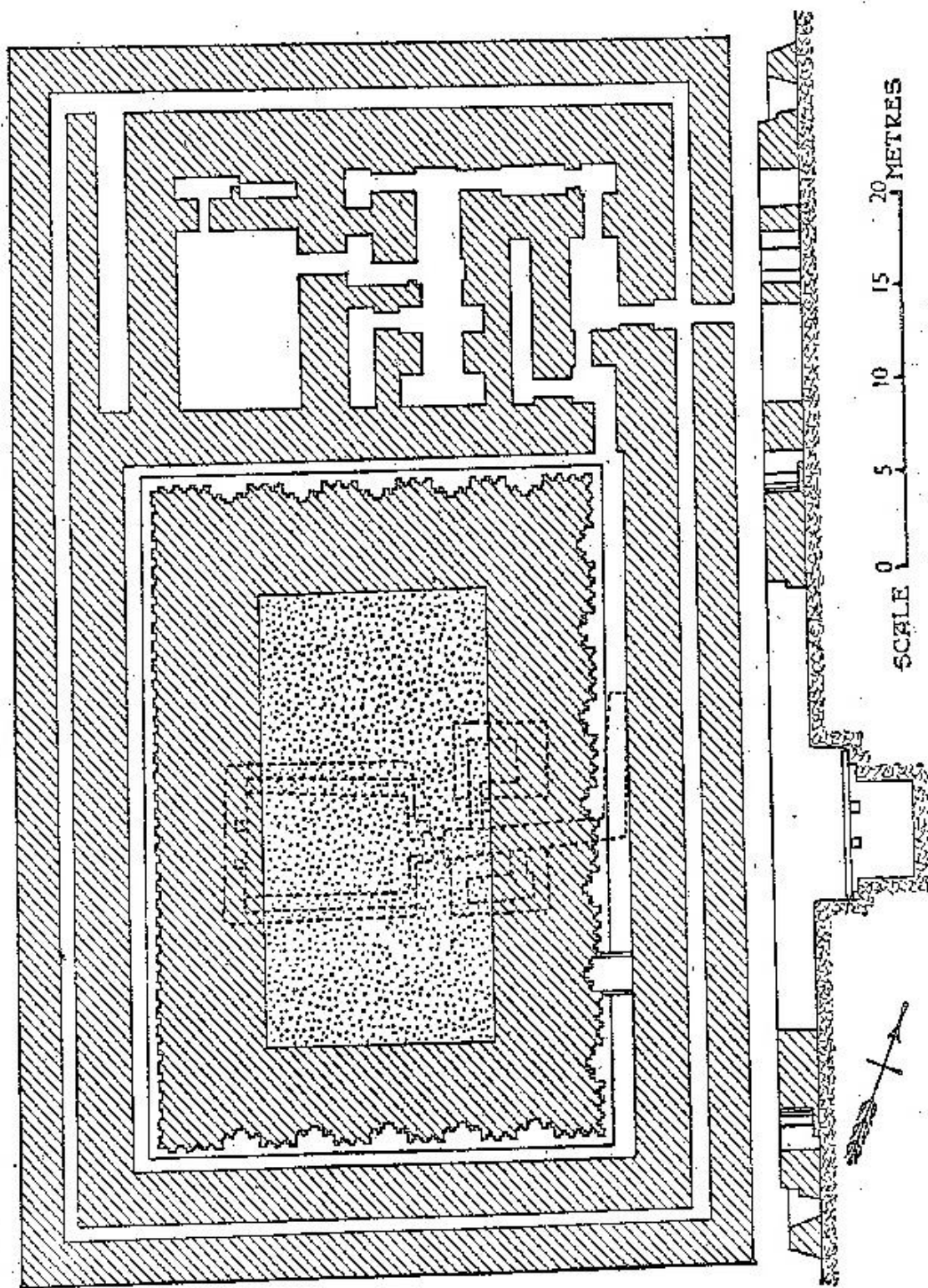


Fig. 52. Stela of Ka'a from Abydos

But this impressive monument at Abydos is small and ill-formed in comparison with the great tomb discovered at Sakkara in 1954 (Fig. 53). The building consists of a rectangular brick superstructure with its exterior decorated with





the usual recessed panelling, on which were found well preserved multi-coloured frescoes of geometrical patterns in imitation of mat-work. A descending passage leads to a rock-cut burial chamber and magazines of similar plan to that of the tomb at Abydos. Surrounding the panelled superstructure is a massive enclosure wall within which, on the north side of the actual tomb, is a funerary temple consisting of a maze of rooms and corridors similar to the mortuary temples of the pyramids. In fact this great building, dated to the end of the First Dynasty, may be considered a prototype of the pyramid complex of later periods. The over-all measurement of the monument is 65 by 37 metres. No traces of the subsidiary burials of sacrificed retainers were found round the tomb and it would appear that by the time of Ka'a this barbaric mortuary custom had died out in the more cultured North. It is true that a subsidiary tomb of some size was discovered on the south side of the entrance to the tomb, but this belonged to a nobleman who was probably given the honour of burial within the precincts of the royal burial place. The stela of this noble, named Merka (Pl. 30a), was found near by and this inscribed monument together with another smaller one of a noble called Sabef, found in the Abydos tomb, show, in the long list of titles inscribed on them, that in Ka'a's time the writing had already developed well beyond a purely archaic form. Moreover, the titles of these nobles are more or less of the conventional form which became the rule in later periods.

Another large tomb at Sakkara (No. 3500) is also dated to Ka's reign, and may well have belonged to his consort or to some other important member of the royal family. Four subsidiary graves were found adjoining this tomb, but although all showed evidence of having been buried at the same time, they do not suggest the mass sacrifice which accompanied the burial of the kings at Abydos.



## THE UNIFICATION

Apart from Merka and Sabef, the nobleman Henuka continued to hold office during the reign of Ka'a.

### FIRST DYNASTY

<i>Name</i>	<i>Major monuments</i>
Hor-aha	Tomb B 19 at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> ) Tomb 3357 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Hor-aha</i> ) Tomb of Nithotep at Nagadeh. (de Morgan, <i>Recherches sur les origines de l'Égypte, Tombeau royal de Nagadeh</i> . Borchardt, 'Das Grab des Menes'. <i>Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache</i> , xxxvi)
Zer	Tomb O at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> ) Tomb 3471 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Great Tombs</i> , i) Tomb 2185 at Sakkara. (Quibell, <i>Archaic Mastabas</i> )
Meryet-nit	Tomb Y at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> ) Tomb 3503 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Great Tombs</i> , ii) Enclosure of sacrifice burials. (Petrie, <i>Tombs of the Courtiers</i> )
Uadji	Tomb Z at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> ) Tomb 3504 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Great Tombs</i> , ii) Tomb at Gizeh. (Petrie, <i>Gizeh and Rifeh</i> )
Udimu	Tomb T at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> ) Tomb 3035 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Tomb of Hemaka</i> ) Tomb 3036 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Great Tombs</i> , i) Tomb 3506 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Great Tombs</i> , ii)
Enezib	Tomb X at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> ) Tomb 3038 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Great Tombs</i> , i)
Semerkheth	Tomb U at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> )
Ka'a	Tomb Q at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> ) Tomb 3505 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Great Tombs</i> , iii) Tomb 3500 at Sakkara. (Emery, <i>Great Tombs</i> , iii)

### THE SECOND DYNASTY

*Hotepsekhemur (Figure 54)*

The cause of the downfall of the First Dynasty is not known and the distinction between the two royal houses is not apparent. Manetho records that both were Thinite in origin but

their southern tombs – with the exception of those of Khassekhemui and Perabsen – if they existed, have not been



Fig. 54.

Horus name  
of Hotep-  
sekhemui

found in this area and certainly they did not form part of the Abydos group at Um-el-Qu'ab. We may therefore conclude that Manetho's statement of a change of dynasty lies on a firm foundation. He tells us that the dynasty consisted of nine rulers who ruled for a total of 302 years. Of these kings, the order of succession of the first four is established on archaeological evidence, but after this the order and identification are very uncertain.

The founder of the dynasty was a king with the Horus name of Hotepsekhemui, who can be identified with Buzau of the king lists and the Boêthos of Manetho. His name Hotepsekhemui appears with those of his two immediate successors on a granite statue found at Memphis. It has been suggested on the evidence of a flint bowl found at Giza, that the order of the names on the statue is not necessarily chronological, but this is unlikely, and the sequence would appear to be correct. His tomb has not yet been found, but, judging from the discovery in a subterranean gallery near the pyramid of Unas at Sakkara of clay jar-sealings bearing his name, it would appear probable that his funerary monument was located in this area. Manetho records that, during this reign of thirty-eight years, a chasm opened at Bubastis and many people perished; as this area of the western Delta shows geological evidence of volcanic disturbance, the story probably has some foundation in fact.

### *Ra-neb (Figure 55)*

Hotepsekhemui was succeeded by Ra-neb who is to be identified with Kakau of the king lists and Kaichos of Manetho. His tomb has not been found, but as with his predecessor Hotepsekhemui, clay sealings belonging to him have been

recovered from the subterranean galleries near the pyramid of Unas at Sakkara, so that his tomb is probably somewhere in this area. In the vicinity of an ancient trade route to the western oasis behind Armant, Ra-neb's name has been found crudely inscribed on the rocks (Fig. 56).

Manetho records that, during the reign of Ra-neb, the worship of the bulls of Apis at Memphis and of Mnevis at Heliopolis and the goat of Mendes were established; but as we have seen, the worship of Apis was already in existence during the First Dynasty. According to the Egyptian historian, Ra-neb reigned for thirty-nine years.



Fig. 55.  
Horus  
name of  
Ra-neb

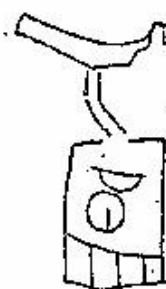


Fig. 56.  
Rock-cut  
name of  
Ra-neb

### *Neteren (Netermu, Figure 57)*

Neteren, the successor of Ra-neb, can be identified with Banentiru of the king lists and with Binôthris of Manetho, who states that he reigned for forty-seven years. Chronicles of the sixth to the twentieth years of the reign are preserved on the Palermo Stone, but they are not of great interest, being principally confined to religious feasts and the usual census figures. However, they do record the foundation of a palace or other important building called Hor-ren in the year 7, and, what is more important, indications of civil war in the year 13. Here reference is made to the destruction of Shemra and Ha ('House of the North'). The chronicles also record the 'running of Apis' in the years 9 and 15.

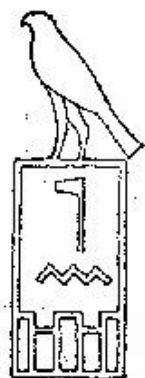


Fig. 57.

According to Manetho, it was during the reign of Neteren that it was decided that women might occupy the throne;

which raises an important question in relation to the puzzling status of Queen Meryet-nit of the previous dynasty.

Neteren's tomb has apparently not been discovered yet. Jar-sealings bearing his name have been found in a tomb near Giza and the possibility must be envisaged that this was his burial place, although three large tombs at Sakkara can also be definitely dated to his reign, and one of immense size (2302, Fig. 58) might also be considered as his final resting

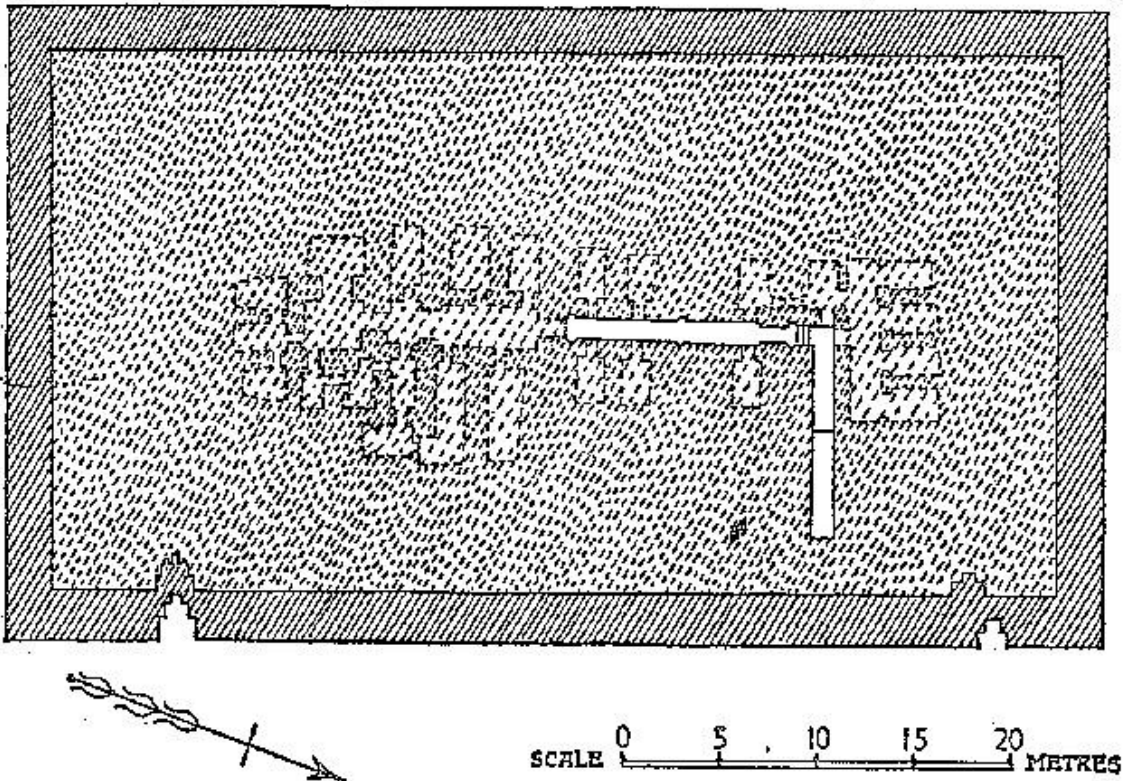


Fig. 58. Plan of Tomb 2302 at Sakkara

place, even though the name of a noble called Ruaben was found on stone jar fragments discovered within the substructure of the building. The superstructure, measuring 58 by 32.64 metres, is built of brick with a solid, black mud filling. The exterior is plain with north and south chapels on the east side. A stairway descending from the east turns at right angles to the south and leads through a portcullis into a complicated series of rock-cut subterranean rooms. Sealings of Neteren have also been found in the vicinity of the pyramid of Unas at Sakkara. A small seated statuette of alabaster, in



the Michailides Collection in Cairo, has been identified as that of Neteren from an inscription on the throne. The king, wearing the White Crown, is depicted in the conventional dress worn at the Sed festival.

*Sekhemib (Figure 59)*

Under Sekhemib, identified with Uaznes of the king list and Manetho's Tlas, some form of political and religious revolution took place. Although we cannot be certain, it would appear probable that the indigenous people of the Nile valley still occupied large areas of the land where they worshipped Set, the god-king of Egypt before the advent of the Followers of Horus. What political motives were behind Sekhemib's actions are unknown, but at some period of his short reign – seventeen years according to Manetho – he appears to have abandoned his allegiance to the god Horus and worshipped Set, changing his name to Perabsen, with the *serech* surmounted with the animal god Set instead of the Hawk which is above his original name of Sekhemib. Like Akhenaten of the Eighteenth Dynasty he erased his original name on his funerary stelae, already erected in his southern tomb at Abydos, and replaced it by his newly acquired Set name. Sekhemib's name with title 'Conqueror of the foreign lands' has been found on stone vase fragments from the Step Pyramid; but apart from this, no remains of his have been found at Sakkara. His only monument is represented by the tomb at Abydos (Fig. 60), which curiously enough is one of the group of the kings of the previous dynasty. The superstructure of the tomb has been entirely destroyed and only the brick-lined pit of the substructure, within which is a central burial chamber surrounded by magazines, remains. The structure is poorly built and even with its superstructure cannot have greatly exceeded an over-all measurement of 21 by 18.5 metres. An unusual feature is that the entrance is on the



east side and it was near here that the two stelae, with their altered inscriptions, were discovered. No evidence has as yet been discovered which might explain the reversion to the worship of Set by a monarch of the Thinite dynasty, but the attitude of Sekhemib Perabsen is clearly shown by his alteration of name on his funerary stelae at Abydos, the figures of Set above his name of Perabsen on many seals, and above all

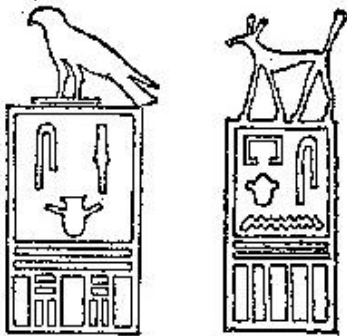


Fig. 59. Horus name of Sekhemib and Set name of Perabsen

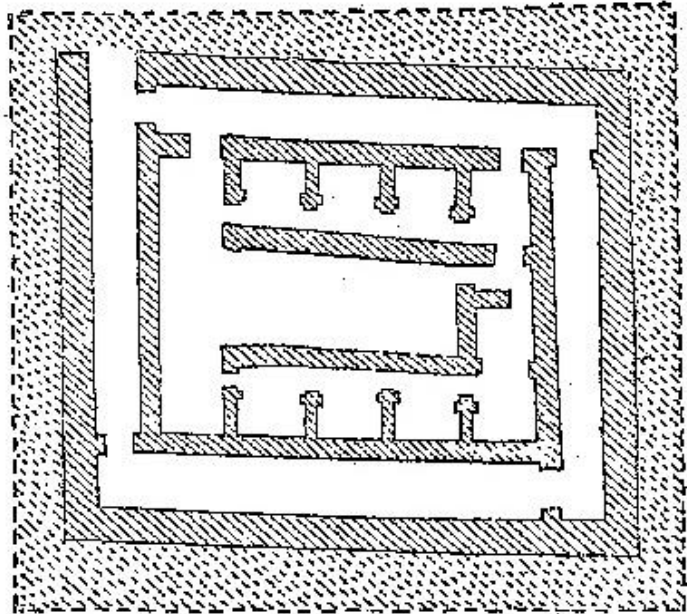
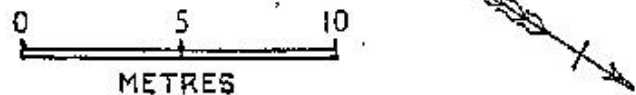


Fig. 60. Plan of Tomb P at Abydos



on the seal of one of his nobles found in his tomb which reads 'The god of Ombos' (the centre of the Set tribes in Upper Egypt) 'to his son Perabsen'. It is possible that the Followers of Set, representing the indigenes, had increased in power to such an extent during the decline of Thinite power that the king found it sound policy to adopt the worship of their god, and certainly even his more powerful descendant Khasekhemui found it necessary to have the figure of Set in equality with Horus above his name. Our knowledge of the period is so fragmentary that it is impossible to postulate any hypothesis which would fit in with all the facts, but it appears almost certain that in Sekhemib's reign some form of religious

revolution and a weakening of the rule of the Thinite kings took place. An archaeological fact which may have its explanation in the events of this undoubtedly disturbed period is the burning of the royal tombs. Nearly all the royal monuments at Abydos, Nagadeh, and Sakkara have been found badly damaged by fire and it was at first thought that this was the work of the early plunderers who wished to obliterate all signs of their sacrilege. However, recent excavation at Sakkara has yielded evidence which strongly suggests that this incendiarism was deliberately done with official sanction and perhaps we have here the results of the warring factions seeking to destroy the after-life of their dynastic opponents. The destruction by fire of these monuments certainly took place at an early date and we may not be in error in ascribing it to this period of obvious religious and political upheaval.

Whatever the results of the changes in his religious allegiance, Sekhemib's spirit was venerated and his cult was preserved at Memphis as well as that of his immediate successor Sendji, as late as the Fourth Dynasty.

### *Sendji*

There are no contemporary monuments of Sendji, who was apparently Sekhemib's successor and is probably to be identified with Manetho's Sthenês whom he states reigned for forty-one years. Although so little is known at present concerning Sendji, it is evident that apart from his long reign he was a monarch of importance and we know that his cult was preserved until a late period; indeed a bronze statue bearing his name was made in the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty, more than 2000 years after his death.

### *Neterka*

The sixth king of the dynasty, according to Manetho, was Chairês, who reigned seventeen years. No contemporary

documents which might be attributed to him have been found, but according to the Turin king list, Sendji was succeeded by a certain Neterka and, although neither the Sakkara or Abydos lists mention him, it is possible that Neterka and Chairês were the same person.

### *Neferkara*

According to Manetho, Chairês was succeeded by Nephercherês, who may be identified with Neferkara whose name appears on the Abydos king list. The Egyptian historian relates that he ruled for twenty-five years and that there is a legend that during his reign the Nile flowed with honey for eleven days.

### *Kha-sekhem (Figure 61)*

The Second Dynasty ends with two kings: Kha-sekhem and Kha-sekhemui; some authorities believe both to be the same person, the former name being an earlier version of the latter adopted by the king when he had reunited Egypt after the religious wars which had split the country (i.e. 'appearance of the Two Powers' instead of 'appearance of the Power'). But on balance it would appear that Kha-sekhem and Kha-sekhemui were two persons, probably the eighth and ninth kings of the dynasty.



Fig. 61.

Horus name  
of Kha-  
sekhem

Kha-sekhem would thus be identical with Huzefa (Neferka-sokar?) of the Sakkara and Turin lists and with Manetho's Sesôchris, who he states reigned for forty-eight years. Although this king's name is omitted on the Abydos list, there is little doubt that his control extended over the whole of Egypt, for monuments of his have been found at Hieraconpolis. But his reign appears to have been stormy and the only relics of the period, two statues, a stela,

and three stone vessels, record war and conquest; and although some of these events may have occurred beyond Egypt's frontier, they indicate a period of national disturbance. The two statues, one of schist (Pl. 31) and one of limestone, are of exceptional artistic merit and they represent Kha-sekhem seated on a throne, wearing the crown of Upper Egypt and the robe usually associated with the Sed festival. Around the bases of both statues is a row of contorted human figures representing slain enemies and on the front is inscribed 'Northern enemies 47,209' (Fig. 62). It has been suggested

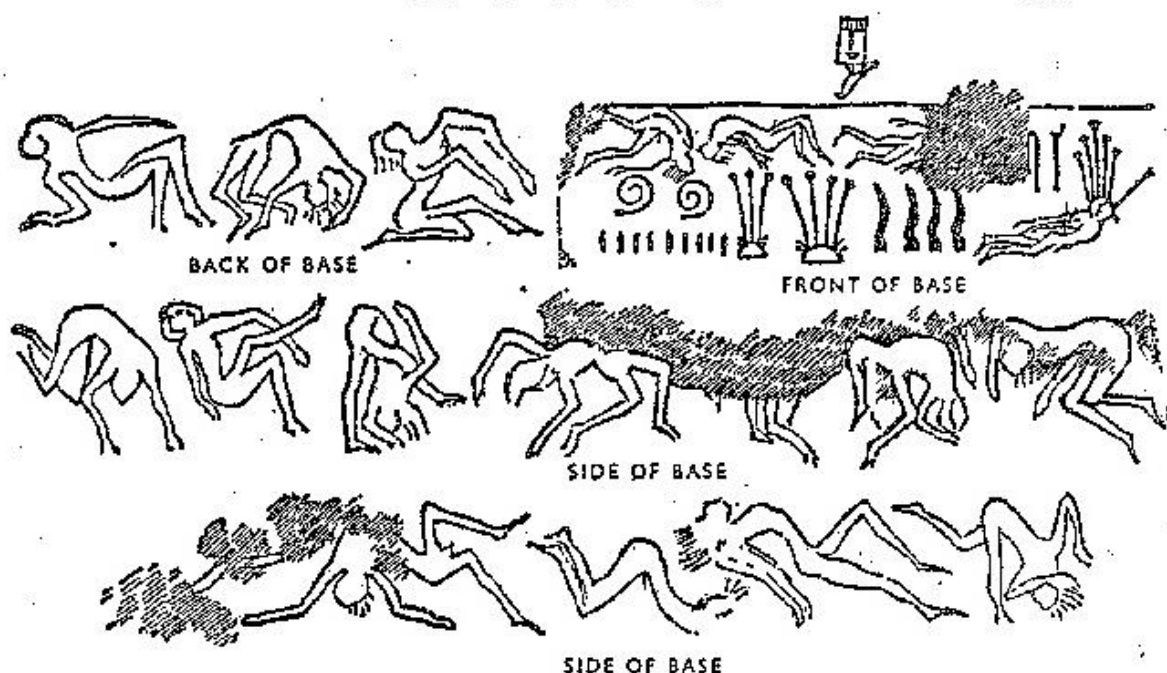


Fig. 62. Inscriptions on the base of the Kha-sekhem statues

that the 'northern enemies' were Libyans who had invaded the Delta, but we must not overlook the possibility of internal insurrection in Lower Egypt.

Further evidence of rebellion in the north comes from the three stone vessels which are identically inscribed 'The year of fighting the northern enemy within the city of Nekheb'. The goddess Nekhbet in vulture form holds a 'signet circle' within which is the word *besh* (rebels), while with the other claw she supports the emblem of the unity of Egypt before the name of Kha-sekhem (Fig. 63).



The fragment of the stela shows part of a kneeling captive, on a platform which ends in the head of a foreigner on which rests a bow (Fig. 64). Below is the name of Kha-sekhem and



Fig. 63. Stone vase inscription of Kha-sekhem

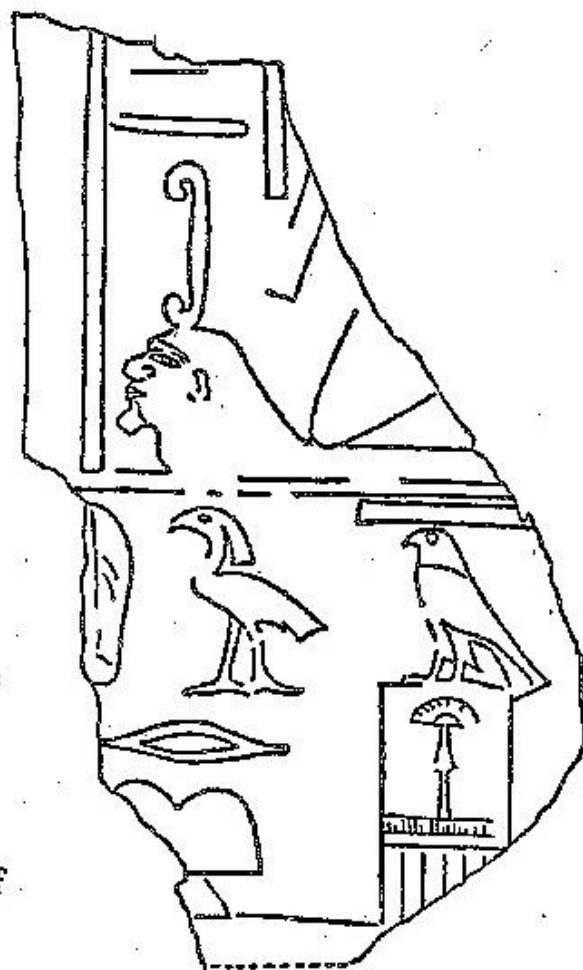


Fig. 64. Fragment of a stela of Kha-sekhem

the text 'humbling the foreign lands'. It is important to note that on his statues the king is shown wearing only the White Crown of Upper Egypt and on the stone vases the hawk above his name also wears the White Crown. The impression gained from this admittedly limited evidence is that Kha-sekhem was a ruler of the Thinite family of Upper Egypt who restored the unity of the Nile valley after the religious wars between the followers of Horus and Set which had probably divided the country since the reign of Perabsen. His very name 'Appearance of the Power' is significant, and the absence of any contemporary monument of his at Sakkara strongly suggests that his rule was centred in the far south,



for even at Abydos no trace of him has been discovered. All the objects described above were found at Hieraconpolis, the original capital of the followers of Horus. His tomb has not yet been discovered and he was perhaps buried in this area.

Assuming Kha-sekhem's identity with Manetho's eighth king, he must indeed have been a leader, for the Egyptian historian records that Sesôchris was 5 cubits and 3 palms high, which would make him a giant of about 8 feet!

### *Kha-sekhemui (Figure 65)*

Kha-sekhem was succeeded by Kha-sekhemui, who was perhaps the most outstanding monarch of the dynasty, for under him the final unity of the country was established and the foundation laid for the astonishing expansion and development of Pharaonic power in the Third Dynasty. As ninth king of the Second Dynasty, he is to be identified with Zazai of the king lists and Chenerês of Manetho, who attributes to him a reign of thirty years.

The struggle between the followers of Horus and Set had come to an end and his name Kha-sekhemui, 'The appearance of the Two Powers', is added to by his fuller name 'The Two Gods in him are at peace'. On the numerous jar-sealings, the king's Ka name is always surmounted by the hawk and the Set animal, a further indication that some form of unity on equal terms had been achieved.

The southern tomb of Kha-sekhemui at Abydos is a fantastic construction bearing no resemblance to other monuments on that site, or indeed to any other contemporary building at Sakkara (Fig. 66). Unfortunately, as with the other Abydos monuments, no superstructure remains, and we have only the substructure to judge of the immense size of the building. It measures 68.97 metres in length, with a



Fig. 65.  
Horus-Set  
name of  
Kha-sek-  
hemui

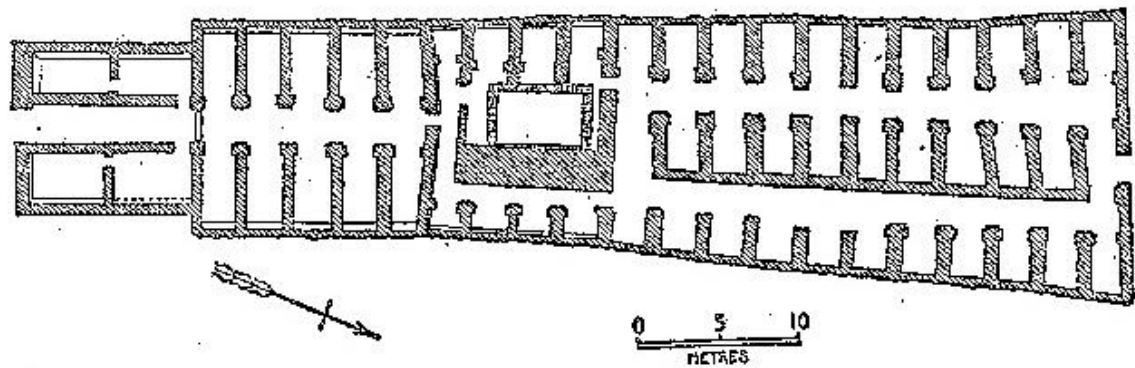


Fig. 66. Plan of Tomb V at Abydos

varying width of between 17.6 and 10.4 metres. It consists of three parts; at the north is a door leading to three rows of thirty-three magazines for offerings and funerary equipment; then comes a stone-built burial chamber flanked by four rooms on either side, and then a further ten magazines, five on each side of a corridor leading to the south door, which is flanked by four more rooms.

The burial chamber was at one time believed to be the oldest example of stone masonry in existence, but excavation at Sakkara and Helwan has shown that building in stone was known in the First Dynasty. A curious feature of Kha-sekhemui's tomb is its irregularity and faulty planning and, impressive as it is in size, it is difficult to believe that only a few years separate it from the magnificent Step Pyramid of Zoser at Sakkara. Apart from the remains of funerary equipment, such as stone and copper vessels, flint and copper tools, pottery, and basketwork, the king's sceptre of gold and sard was recovered from the tomb.

Kha-sekhemui also conducted building operations at Hierakonpolis, where a granite door jamb was recovered. This monument, bearing the double name of the king surmounted by Horus and Set, probably came from a temple long since destroyed. The workmanship is well advanced and the resemblance in style and execution to the sculptured work of the early Third Dynasty is so obvious that its date, at the end of the Second Dynasty, cannot be questioned. On the back

## THE UNIFICATION

of the jamb is a partly defaced inscription which depicts the king and the goddess Sheshet in what is obviously a foundation ceremony. Like his predecessor of the early First Dynasty, Kha-sekhemui appears to have adopted the political strategy of marriage with a northern princess, and his queen seems to have been Nemathap who, according to a jar-sealing from Abydos, bore the title of 'the king-bearing mother' (Fig. 67). She was later worshipped as the ancestress of the kings of the Third Dynasty.

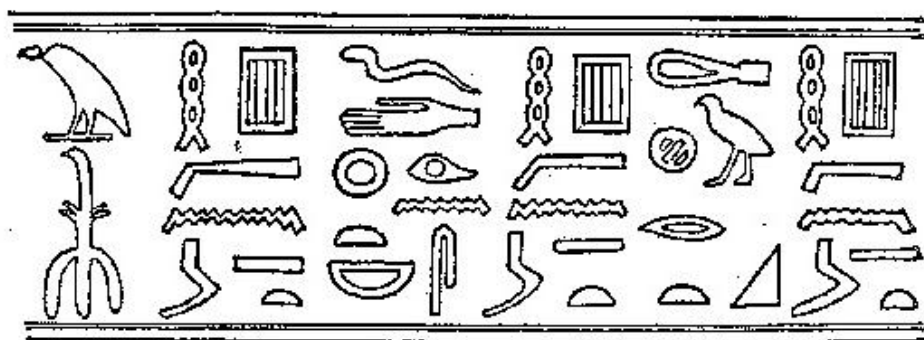


Fig. 67. Jar-sealing of Queen Nemathap

With the death of Kha-sekhemui the Archaic Period of Egypt's history comes to an end, and the united Two Lands stand on the threshold of the glorious epoch of the pyramid builders.

### SECOND DYNASTY

<i>Name</i>	<i>Major monuments</i>
Hotepsekhemui	Tomb unknown. Jar-sealings from Sakkara (Barsanti, 'Fouilles autour de la Pyramide d'Ounas', <i>Annales du Service des Antiquités</i> , vol. III, p. 182)
Ra-neb	Tomb unknown
Néteren	Tomb unknown. Tomb of Ruaben. No. 2302 at Sakkara. (Quibell, <i>Archaic Mastabas</i> )
Sekhemib-Perabsen	Tomb P at Abydos. (Petrie, <i>Royal Tombs</i> )
Sendji	No contemporary monuments
Neterka	No contemporary monuments
Neferkara	No contemporary monuments

## ARCHAIC EGYPT

Kha-sekhem

Tomb unknown. Statues and stela from Hierakonpolis. (Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*)

Kha-sekhemui

Tomb V at Abydos. (Petrie, *Royal Tombs*)  
Temple remains from Hierakonpolis.  
(Quibell, *Hierakonpolis*)

## *Chapter 2*

### THE STATE

#### THE MONARCHY

THE monarchy of Egypt's first two dynasties appears to have had all the characteristics which we associate with later periods. It was absolute, and the king was a god incarnate, and, although there were naturally distinctions of class there were no castes, for all were commoners before the 'good god' who was identified with Horus. Well may we accept the question and answer of the Vizier Rekhmire, written about 1500 B.C., as being as true of the monarchy during the Archaic Period as it was during the Empire, nearly 1700 years later. Rekhmire wrote:

What is the King of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father and mother of all men, alone by himself, without an equal.

But it was a dual monarchy and, so soon after the unification, the individuality of two states of the North and South was more marked than in later times. In fact there appear to have been two separate administrations united only under the throne. Even the elaborate ceremonies of the king's coronation, his 'Sed' festival or jubilee and ultimate burial, were twice repeated with the different insignia, architecture, and customs of Upper and Lower Egypt.

The insignia of royalty of the two lands were at first separate and the kings are shown sometimes wearing the White Crown (Hedjet) of the South and sometimes the Red Crown (Deshert) of the North. But soon, some long-forgotten designer



produced the 'Double Crown' (Sekhemti), a combination of the two emblems, and henceforth, except when the monarch was specifically portrayed as the ruler of one or other of the two lands, he is shown wearing the crown of all Egypt (Fig. 68).

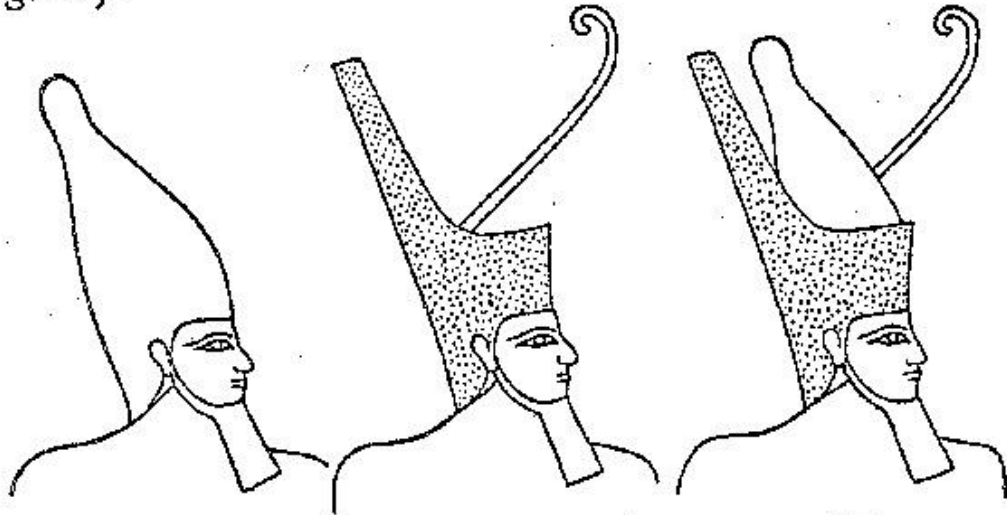


Fig. 68. The White, Red, and Double Crowns of Egypt

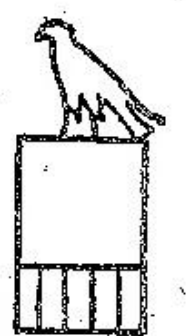
Throughout Egypt's long history the royal titulary shows plainly that the conception of two distinct and separate nations united under one monarch was strictly adhered to, and indeed even to this day the distinction between the two lands survives in many ways. The titulary of the kings of the Archaic Period appears to have been confined to three of the five 'great names' in common use during later times. First we have the 'Horus name' which was written inside a rectangular frame representing the 'Great House' or royal palace with its recessed panelling, reproductions of which we have in the superstructure of the northern tombs at Sakkara (Fig. 69A). Surmounting this rectangular frame (known as the *serekh*) is the falcon of Horus, the dynastic god of all Egypt (identified with the sun god and the son and avenger of Osiris, the symbol of dead kingship). This, the Horus name, took precedence on the monuments over all other names and is the only certain identification found on objects discovered at Abydos and Sakkara.

No surer indication of a change in loyalties is shown than when we find the Set animal above the *serekh* of Perabsen in the Second Dynasty, for in this, his first name, this king identified himself with the deity whom he believed to be supreme throughout Egypt.

Second comes the *nebti* name, so called because of the reading of the preliminary title 'The Two Ladies', represented by figures of the vulture of the goddess Nekhbet of Upper Egypt and the cobra of the goddess Wadjet of Lower Egypt (Fig. 69B). This title above the second name of the king symbolizes the fact that he is the force uniting the dual monarchy of the Nile valley. The *nebti* name goes back at least to the time of Hor-aha at the commencement of the First Dynasty.

The third name which was taken by the king at his assumption of power was preceded by the title *nesu-bit* (Fig. 69C), meaning 'He who belongs to the sedge and bee'. We do not yet know the exact meaning of these two symbols but the sedge sign certainly represented Upper Egypt and the bee Lower Egypt, and the meaning is clear: it represents the title 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt'. The *nesu-bit* name first appears on objects of King Udimu, but this does not necessarily mean that it was not in use at an earlier period.

It is the various names that each king bore which have caused such confusion in their identification, for whereas the all-important Horus name predominates on objects from their contemporary monuments, the king lists of the Eighteenth Dynasty use their *nesu-bit* names and Manetho appears to have used the Grecianized form of either the *nesu-bit* or the *nebti* names. It is only occasionally that



A



B



C

Fig. 69.  
The 'Three  
Great  
Names'

on contemporary monuments we find the Horus, *nebti*, and *nesu-bit* names in correlation.

The king was a being apart and as the living Horus was the link between gods and men; as such he must not be allowed to fail either from age or ill health. It would appear probable that in primitive times, when the king showed signs of failing powers, he was forcibly removed by death. But this was in the dim and distant past, and by the time of the Unification, priestly magic had replaced barbaric custom and instead of violent replacement, the king's vigour was revived by the mysterious ceremonies of the Sed festival. Although the festival appears to have had the character of a jubilee and a reassertion of the king's sovereignty and possession of the land of Egypt, it was certainly more than a mere commemoration of the royal accession. It was a necessary rejuvenation of the king, for as Rekhmire tells us, the king 'is a god by whose dealings one lives' and thus the whole nation was deeply concerned with the celebration of these important rites. Sometimes the festival took place thirty years after the king's assumption of power, but judging from the evidence of the Palermo Stone, the Sed festival was celebrated by some of the archaic kings repeatedly and at much shorter intervals. Our knowledge of the actual ceremonial of the feast is uncertain, but some features can be interpreted with reasonable clearness.

In order to celebrate the festival, special buildings were erected, which included a Throne Room and a Robing Room in which the king changed his dress and insignia according to the various double rites connected with the two lands. But most important was the Heb-Sed Court, flanked on both sides with chapels of the Upper and Lower Egyptian gods of each nome or province. It would appear that in the open space between the two rows of shrines, the king, attired alternately in the insignia of Upper and Lower Egypt, ran a ritual

race round a course which was called the 'field'. The king ran round the boundaries of the 'field' four times as the ruler of the South and four times as ruler of the North. Probably the 'field' represented Egypt and the ritual race perhaps signified his claim as possessor of the land; also, as the source of the national fertility, his action made the land fruitful and productive.

Other ceremonies took place during the Sed festival, such as the act of homage to the king by the 'Great Ones of Upper and Lower Egypt'; but the actual act of the rejuvenation of the monarch is not, as yet, understood; neither is the meaning of Heb-Sed, the name of the feast. But undoubtedly further research on this vital subject will reveal ultimately the basic foundation of the Egyptians' conception of kingship.

## THE GOVERNMENT

Like the monarchy, the actual government of the united country was dual, and we find that the two nations had each their own centre of administration consisting of chancellery and treasury, housed in the 'White House' of the South and the 'Red House' of the North. In later times, the dual character of Egypt's government more or less disappeared; but during the period of the first two dynasties it undoubtedly existed. Indeed from the limited evidence it would appear that there were two viziers, one for Upper Egypt and one for Lower Egypt, and it seems evident that the only semblance of union for the two administrations was in the person of the king.

Each of the two lands was divided into 'nomes' or provinces, which were survivals of the tribal areas of the Predynastic period. The governors of these provinces were, perhaps, at that early period descendants of the earlier tribal chiefs and were the 'great ones' who advised the king.



## ARCHAIC EGYPT

From jar-sealings and inscribed labels we can see that there was an effective fiscal organization, central control of the irrigation of the Nile, an organized judicial system, and all the indications of an effective administrative machinery. We even find the title 'Scribe of Secrets', which might suggest the existence of that necessity of the modern world, a security service!

### THE SOCIAL CLASSES

Through the evidence obtained from their burial customs, we are able to distinguish three distinct social classes in Egypt during the period of the first two dynasties. These groups consist of the nobility, officials and artisans, and the peasantry. Burial grounds of each of these three main ranks of the population are well represented in the districts surrounding Menes' capital, the 'White Wall' (Memphis). Behind the city at Sakkara we have what appear to be the tombs of the kings, members of the royal family, and the great nobles, equipped with all the furniture and necessities of a highly civilized and luxurious way of life. Across the river at Helwan are the tombs of the lesser nobility and official classes, similar in design. Although much smaller and with less valuable equipment, they too show a high standard of living. The artisan class is, as yet, only represented in the subsidiary graves which surround the tombs of the kings and great nobles. But here again we find funerary structures which are miniature copies of those of their masters, and the carefully coffined bodies were surrounded with food and drink and the equipment necessary to their various crafts.

So much for the rulers of the land and their immediate followers and subordinates, all of whom appear to form a group apart, ruling and controlling the mass of the people who, during the period of the First Dynasty, were probably in the main racially separate, being descendants of the in-



indigenous inhabitants of the Nile valley before the advent of the dynastic race. Their graves, well represented throughout Egypt, are just a natural development of the late predynastic burial. With the exception of the larger graves of the village notables, the burials, with their shallow pits and circular superstructure, are not rich in equipment, and, in comparison with the graves of the sacrificed retainers and artisans of the nobility, are poor and bear all the marks of a serf people. But towards the end of the Second Dynasty the results of racial fusion become apparent and there is evidence that the lower orders in many parts of the country adopted the burial customs of their superiors, a fact which in all probability was reflected in their everyday life.

Although the records are, as yet, too meagre to make any certain analysis of the social system of that remote period, the general indications are that it was mainly feudal in character: a large serf population of the indigenes serving a nobility of superior race and culture. The mass of this serf people would be employed in agriculture, but a proportion must have served in the mines and quarries, the construction of irrigation projects, military service, and the building of temples, palaces and tombs. Gradually they would come into closer contact with their rulers by the growth of an artisan class, which, towards the close of the Archaic Period, must have caused the fusion of races. This in later times was to develop into the all-important middle class, so essential and powerful in the Pharaonic state.

## *Chapter 3*

### THE MILITARY SYSTEM

At a period such as this the military formed an important section of the community; but recruited, as they must have been, from all social levels of the master race, they cannot be distinguished as a class. In the formative years following the Unification, it is probable that the warriors were exclusively the descendants of the dynastic race; but as the pacification of the land progressed and the Pharaonic power became established, recruitment for the army would be extended to the mass of the indigenous population.

#### ORGANIZATION

In later times the army was organized on a feudal system, and we have every reason to believe that this system must have originated in the Archaic Period. As the power of the early Thinite kings extended, the conquered tribal chiefs would be compelled to supply their overlord with soldiers and so the system would grow and each province or nome would send its young men to serve the king under their own tribal standard and probably led by their own headman. We have no knowledge of any officer class or indeed of the system of leadership, but over-all control of the armies apart from that of the king must certainly have existed.

#### EQUIPMENT

Let us examine the equipment of these early warriors. They appear to have had no body armour, neither did they carry

a shield. Their weapons consisted of the bow and arrow, the spear, the axe, the mace, and the dagger. The bow was small, not exceeding 3 ft in length, and shaped in the form shown in Fig. 70. Unfortunately, no wooden bows of the period have



Fig. 70. Archaic warriors from the 'Hunter's palette'

as yet been found and we are dependent for our knowledge of the design from figures on late predynastic palettes. But with regard to arrows, we are more fortunate, for hundreds of specimens of varied types were found in the remains of leather quivers in one of the great tombs at Sakkara. The size and lightness of these arrows confirms the comparative smallness of the bow, which can only otherwise be estimated by the portrayal of it on the palettes. The five types of arrows shown in Fig. 71 were apparently in common use. The first type has an average length of 19½ in. and has a head formed by an agate lunate cemented to the top of a short ebony stick which is socketed into a hollow reed shaft. The base of the shaft has two feathers attached with gum and thread, and has a V-shaped notch for the bowstring. This type of arrow with its lunate head continued to be used in Egypt until at least as late as the Eighteenth Dynasty. The second type also has a lunate head of agate but smaller in size and attached to an ivory stick socketed into the reed shaft which also has feathers at the base, but with a square-cut notch instead of the V-cut for the bowstring. The third type has a barbed head formed by the jaw of a small fish cemented on to an ivory stick. The reed shaft is feathered, with a square-cut

notch. The fourth and fifth types differ only in the size of the head, which is just a plain ivory point socketed direct into the reed shaft. Arrows of these two types are not feathered, as it was only considered necessary for those with the ill-balanced heads of the first, second, and third types. It is interesting to note that arrows of the third and fifth types have the tips of their heads painted red, either to denote that they

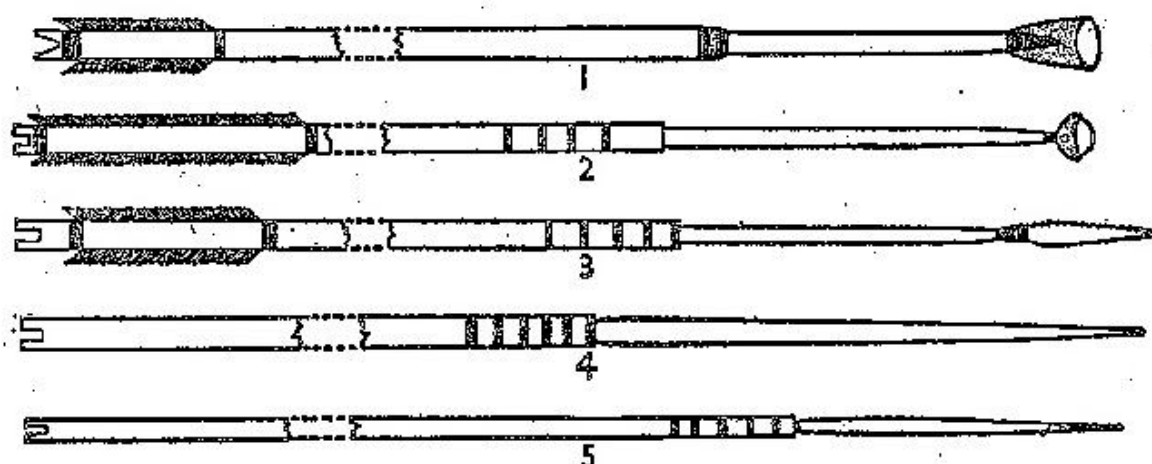


Fig. 71. Types of arrows

were poisoned or with the idea of sympathetic magic which would draw the arrow to the blood of the target. Flint-headed arrows of a heavier type were also very common.

Stabbing spears with copper and ivory heads have been found, but these probably represent the superior weapons of the nobility and we may conclude that flint-headed spears would be in common use by the rank and file.

The short-hafted battle-axe with both stone and copper blade was also in common use. The head was attached to the haft with leather thongs. We have the figure of a warrior on one of the late predynastic palettes which shows him carrying a battle-axe with a double head; but no weapon of this type has actually been found.

The mace with short haft and stone head of two types was a favourite weapon. The most common type of head was pear-shaped, as shown in Figs. 72 and 73B, and in scenes of

the king ceremonially killing his defeated enemy he is almost invariably shown to be armed with this weapon (Fig. 4). Great ceremonial mace-heads of the pear-shaped type engraved with scenes of historical importance were kept in the temples. The second type, shown in Fig. 73A, was obviously a light weapon, probably with a short haft, for combat at close quarters.

Daggers had blades of both flint and copper, with handles of wood, bone, or ivory. The weapon was carried in the belt.

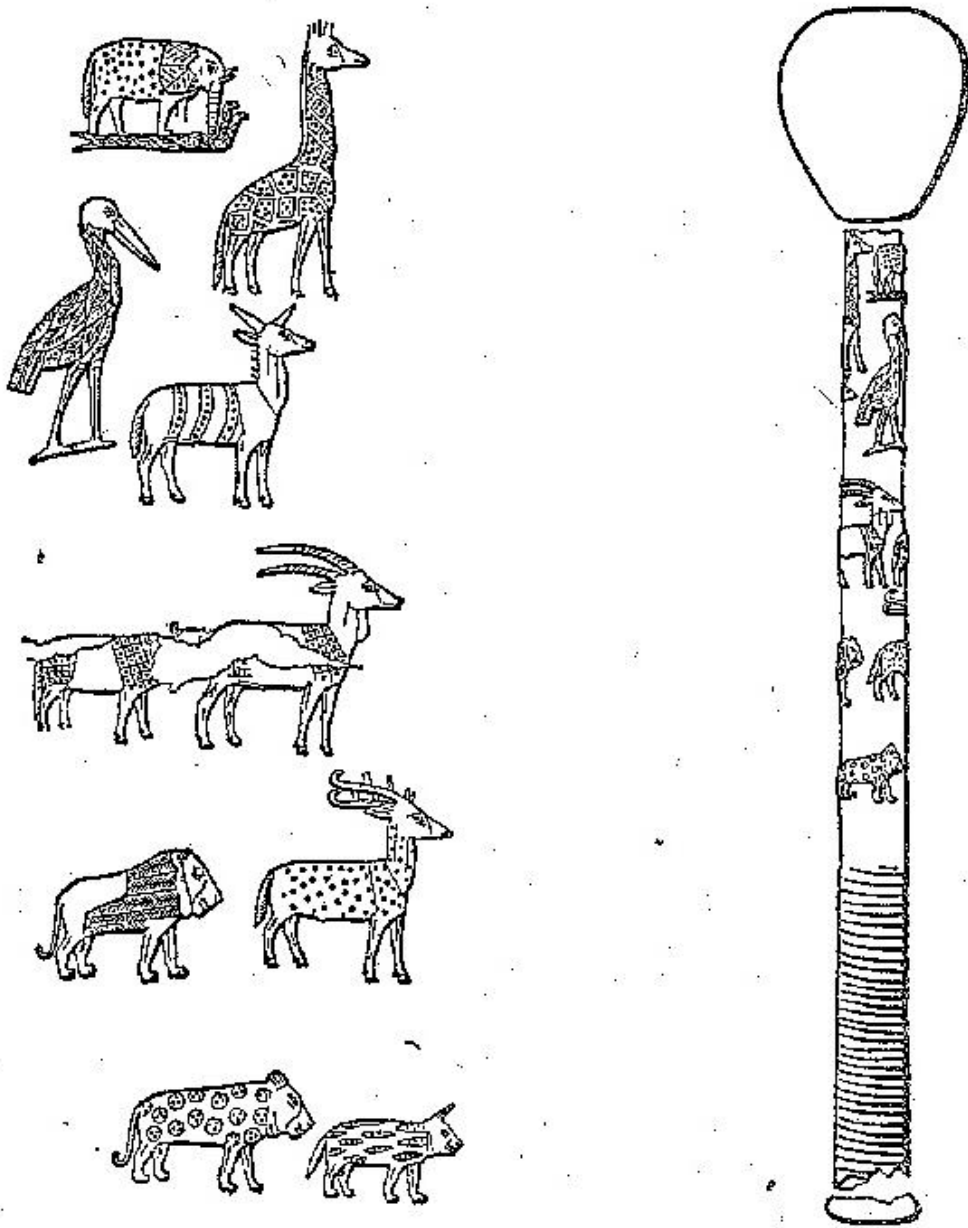


Fig. 72. Gold mace-handle with stone mace-head, from Nubia



## ARCHAIC EGYPT

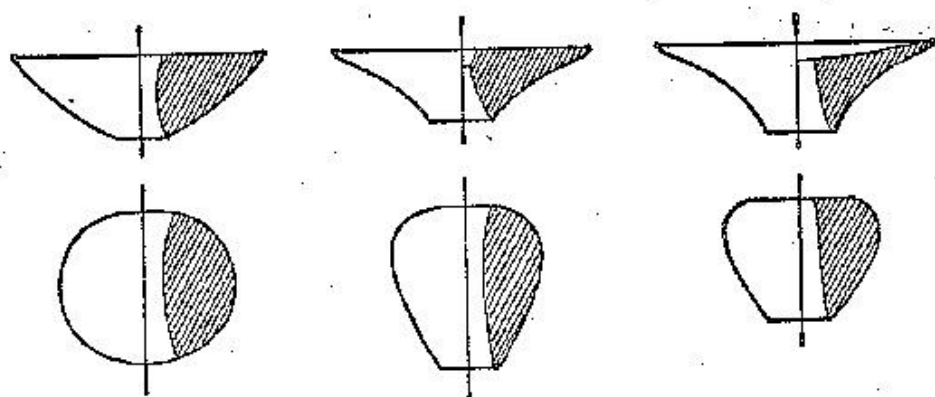


Fig. 73. Types of stone mace-heads

## FORTIFICATION

We have, of course, no evidence of how these early warriors fought, whether they entered into battle as organized units or whether they rushed into the fray as a rabble following their chosen leader. But on balance it would appear, from the detailed depiction of their tribal standards and the distinction in arms carried by the warriors on the Hunter's palette (Pl. 1b), that the armies of these early kings were properly organized fighting groups of archers, spearmen, etc., properly controlled under their tribal chiefs. Only highly organized troops could have stormed the fortified towns which we know to have existed, for conventional representations on palettes and labels show the symbolical falcon and his allies hacking down the bastioned walls of enemy camps or towns (Fig. 74). Some conception of these fortified enclosures may be gained by examining the so-called forts of Kha-sekhemui and Perabsen at Abydos. The immense enclosures are still the subject of controversy, but it is beyond dispute that these date to the latter half of the Second Dynasty. They have variously been described as forts and valley temples connected with the royal tombs in the vicinity, but I consider it probable that they were the enclosures surrounding the Upper Egyptian residence of the king. As such, they were built to give maximum protection to the monarch, and

although they cannot be described as forts they embodied unmistakable features of military architecture. The structure ascribed to Kha-sekhemui, from the evidence of jar-sealings, is rectangular in plan, with double walls separated by a corridor. The over-all measurement of the enclosure is 465 ft from north to south and 250 ft from east to west; the outer wall is 11 ft thick and the inner and main wall 18 ft thick, standing probably to a minimum height of 30 ft. There were four gateways and the two principal ones situated in the north-east and south-east corners are designed on sound military principles of defence (Figs. 75 and 76). The enclosure of Perabsen is smaller and has only one wall, but the surviving gateway shows the same principle of defence. Another great enclosure of similar type exists at Hieraconpolis, and although no definite dating evidence has been found, it would appear probable that the structure also belongs to the Archaic Period.

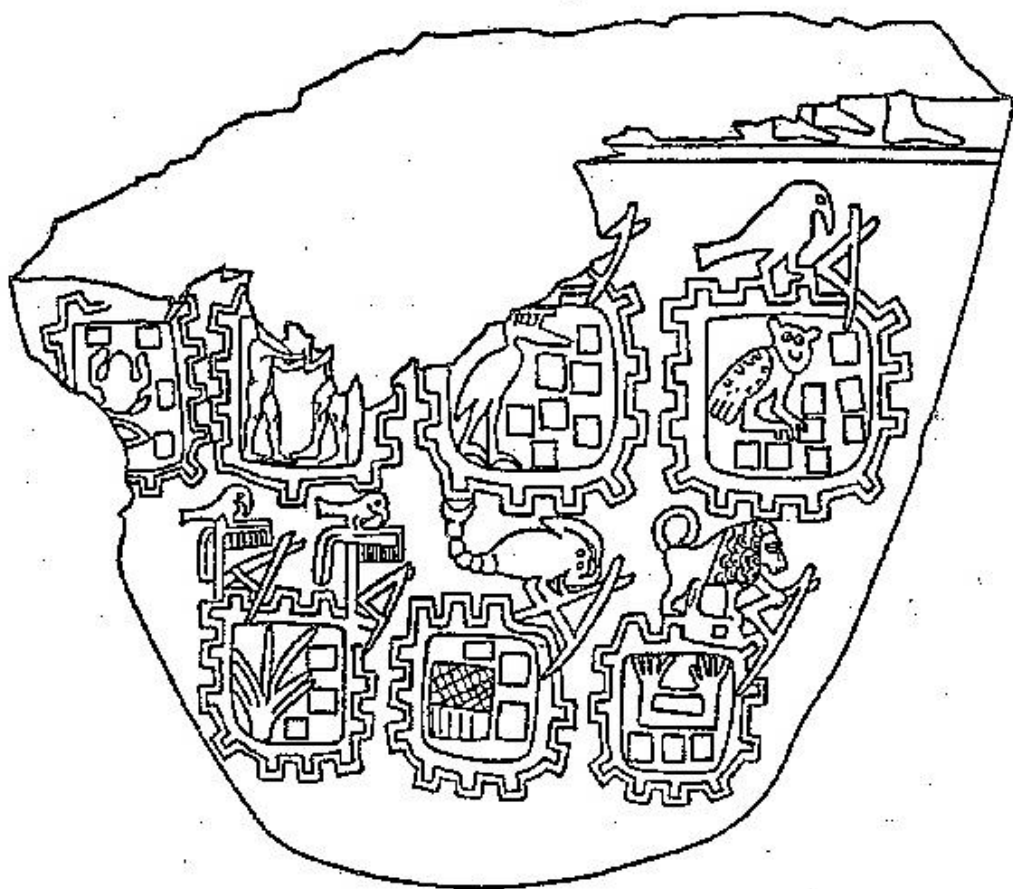


Fig. 74. Fragment of a stone palette, showing fortified enclosures

## ARCHAIC EGYPT

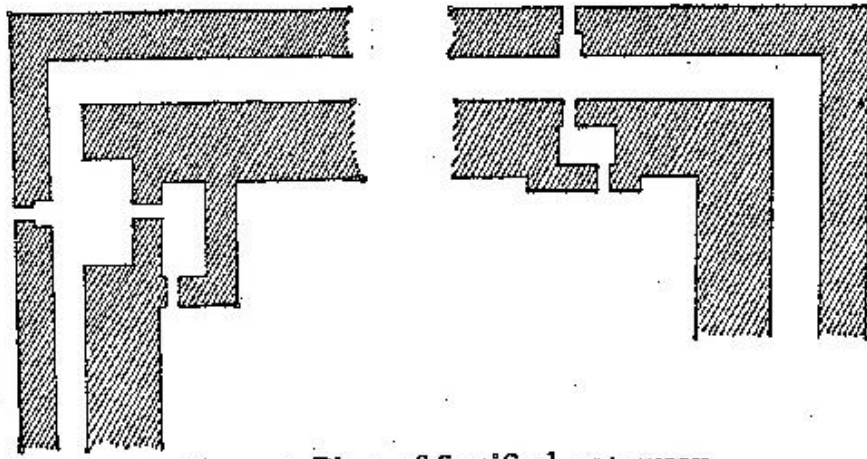


Fig. 75. Plan of fortified gateways

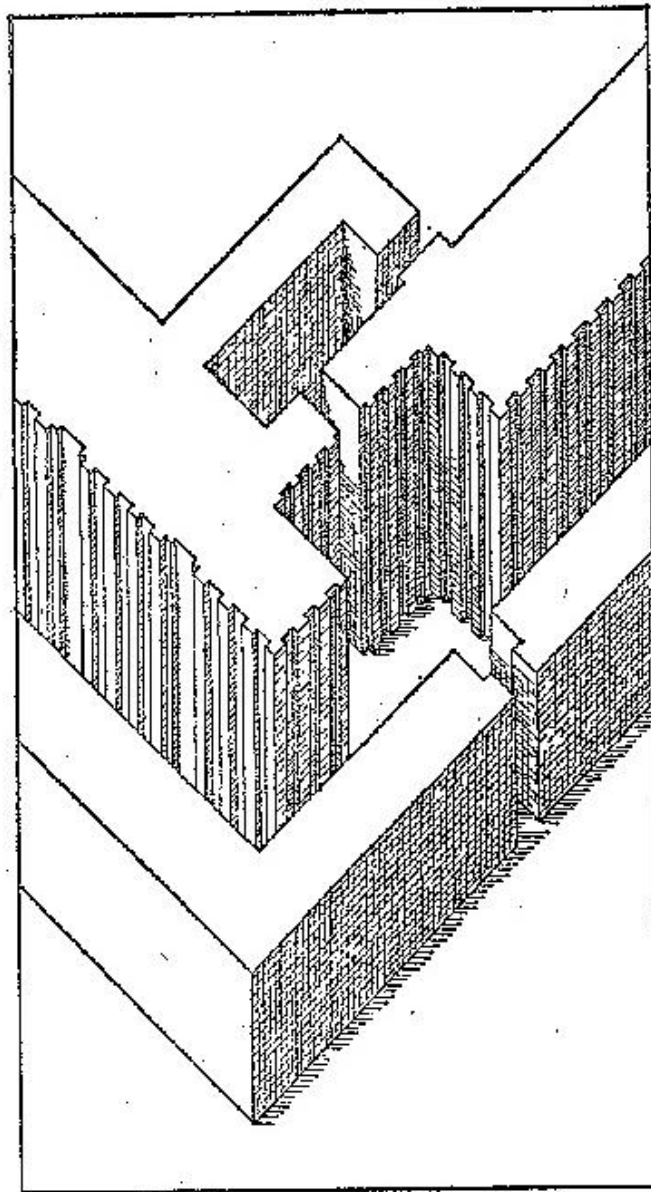


Fig. 76. Axonometric view of fortified gateway

## *Chapter 4*

# RELIGION

### THE GODS

WITH the paucity of written material our knowledge of religion in Archaic Egypt is necessarily limited, but as the work of research progresses we are able to identify more and more of the gods who were well known in later periods as having been worshipped by the Egyptians of the earliest times.

Prior to the Unification there was a multitude of cults unconnected and entirely localized, each being the particular worship of the god of the tribe. The evolution of these cults was part of the political development of Egypt, for as the tribal areas became welded into principalities and finally into the two separate kingdoms of the North and South, so a mythology was created which united the tribal deities. The god of the conquered tribe was not suppressed but was annexed by the conqueror, who supplanted his defeated predecessor as a son of the deity. These tribal gods became the 'nome' gods of later times and their prerogatives were maintained by the king, who claimed their special protection, just as in prehistoric times had some long-forgotten chieftain.

By the time of the Unification we find the tribes of the dynastic race, both in the North and South, worshipping as their supreme deity the sky-god Horus whose symbol was the falcon, while the descendants of the indigenes appear to have acknowledged Set as their chief god. In early times, these Set-worshipping people were a very powerful section

of the population of the Nile valley, occupying a large area of Upper Egypt centred round Ombos (in the modern province of Keneh). So powerful were they that at one time their god Set became the equal of Horus and indeed, at one period during the Second Dynasty, Set displaces Horus as the royal deity. An echo of the struggle between the Horus and Set worshippers is contained in the myths of later times relating to the triumph of good, represented by Horus, over evil, represented by Set.

We know nothing of the origin of Horus, but certainly by the time of the Unification he may be recognized as a sky-god, and the religion of the king who was the living Horus was undoubtedly a celestial cult, just as it was in later times. Prior to recent discoveries at Sakkara it was generally believed that Sun worship only became the religion of the state during the Pyramid Age, but the existence of the graves of funerary barks attached to the big tombs at Sakkara and later found with the burials of the nobility at Helwan show that the primary belief that the dead must join the company of the gods on their journey across the heavens was generally accepted, even as early as the commencement of the First Dynasty. Other gods of the dynastic people, mostly local and tribal in origin, were soon absorbed into the circle of sky mythology, but the mass of the population descended from the indigenes who in the early years of the dual monarchy, forming a distinct and largely separate racial group, still gave their allegiance to the tribal gods of their ancestors, and above all to Set. As the fusion of the two main racial groups progressed under the stable influence of the united control of the two lands, many of these ancient gods were assimilated into the solar synthesis and their primitive characteristics were obliterated. But Set was not assimilated and throughout Egyptian history he remains a deity apart, for because of political reasons in the Archaic Period, his cult was a rallying



point for the dispersed people of predynastic Egypt. His existence could not be ignored, but except at certain short periods, and obviously on grounds of political expediency, Set was considered to be the personification of evil; so much so that in Classical times he was identified with Typhon. But in the period with which we deal, Set probably was the beneficent deity of a large proportion of the inhabitants of the Nile valley long before he became a part of the Osirian synthesis of which I will write later. Set was represented by an unidentified animal which had the appearance of a dog with a vertical tail with a split tip, and the head of an ant-eater with high square-topped ears.

Thus, in early dynastic Egypt there were two distinct and irreconcilable cults, which only became temporarily united at the close of the Second Dynasty as a matter of political expediency. But there were other major religions, notably Rē at Heliopolis, Ptah at Memphis, Osiris at Busiris, and Min of Coptos, which although gradually recast in some form of theoretical unity, must, so soon after the Unification, have remained largely distinct. Indeed a reasonable unity was never really attained and throughout Egyptian history the theologians never succeeded in forming a pantheon which was not riddled with inconsistencies.

The worship of the sun-god Rē seems to have originated at Heliopolis, which remained the centre of his cult until the rise of Christianity. The god was conceived as the sun itself in the form of the disk. When the Thinite kings established the capital at Memphis, they perhaps came under the influence of the priesthood of the sun-cult which probably was firmly established long before the Unification. The ultimate result appears to have been a fusion of the sky-god Horus with the sun-god Rē, as a composite deity Rē-Harakhte and the king identified with Horus became the son of Rē. But this fusion seems not to have occurred until the Second Dynasty,

although the symbol of the winged disk appears above the Horus name of Uadji on a comb found at Abydos (Fig. 146).

When Menes selected the site of his capital in an area near the apex of the Delta, a local god of the neighbourhood soon came into prominence. This was Ptah, who according to the Memphite theology was the creator of the universe. It is possible that the god originated in some long-forgotten human genius, for unlike the mass of Egyptian deities he was not represented in animal form or with any animal attributes. He is shown as a man wrapped in the garments of a mummy with no headdress but a close fitting skull cap.

The cult of Ptah remained powerful throughout Egyptian history, particularly with the educated classes, for unlike those of other gods it was predominantly spiritual and attained a higher level of religious thinking than that of the other more materialistic Egyptian faiths. Although Ptah has not been precisely identified in any contemporary documents, it is possible that the mummiform figure carried in processions on the label of Zer (Fig. 21) is a representation of him. Manetho tells us that Menes built a temple to Ptah at Memphis and the records of the First and Second Dynasties on the Palermo Stone mention the feast of Sokar, god of the Memphite necropolis, who was assimilated to Ptah.

Welding  
Symbol  
old?

Until recently it was questioned as to whether the worship of Osiris had developed in archaic times; but the discovery at Helwan of the *Dad* symbol of the god and the girdle tie of his female counterpart Isis (both of First Dynasty date) shows that the cult which was to remain the most favoured of the masses of Egypt throughout her long history was already in existence. The cult, although having characteristics of nature worship, was primarily the worship of dead kingship, and the myth of Osiris seems to be an echo of long-forgotten events which actually took place. These events were

perhaps originally unconnected and belonged to different periods which were later welded together into a moral story of the struggle between good and evil. The myth of the treacherous murder of the good king Osiris by his brother Set, and the vengeance and re-establishment of beneficent rule by Osiris' son Horus who founded a line of demi-gods from whom the Pharaohs were descended all suggest episodes perhaps connected with the prehistoric struggles between the dynastic peoples and the indigenes of the Nile valley. At this stage of our knowledge it is idle to speculate, but the recent discovery at Helwan of proof of the existence of Osiris and Isis in the First Dynasty suggests that the connexion of the royal god Horus with Osiris, the symbol of dead kingship, was not entirely the result of the theological jugglery of later times but was perhaps based on some historical foundation.

The original centre of the Osiris cult was at Busiris in the eastern delta; but he was not the primitive god of this locality. He had supplanted a more ancient deity called Andjti, from whom he took certain features of his regalia, such as the double plumes of his crown and the shepherd's crook. We have no representation of Osiris in the Archaic Period but the seated mummiform figure of King Udimu on the label of Hemaka (Fig. 37) is an accurate forerunner of the appearance of the god as portrayed in later monuments; so much so that some authorities have mistaken the figure for that of Osiris, whereas it represents the king in the garments of the dead, at his Sed festival.

Other deities of lesser importance are known to have been worshipped in archaic times. Anubis, a god of the dead and a protector of the necropolis, was also an important figure in Osirian mythology, represented in early times as a seated wolf or dog. Feasts of Anubis are mentioned in the First Dynasty records on the Palermo Stone.

Aker, a cosmic god, was represented as the two fore-parts

of a lion joined together, each facing in opposite directions. Aker was supposed to guard the two horizons and the sun god entered the mouth of one lion in the evening and emerged out of the mouth of the other at dawn. In the religious literature of later periods, Aker is represented as two complete seated lions, back to back, and described as representing today and tomorrow.

Apis was the sacred bull of Memphis. Bull worship was well established long before the Unification and probably before the advent of the dynastic race. This animal symbolized for the Egyptians strength in war and in fertility, and as such was considered the abode of a supernatural power. Apis was a manifestation of the god Ptah and the Classical author Aelian tells us that the worship of this bull was established by Menes. Archaeological evidence tends to confirm this and certainly the cult was in existence during the First Dynasty. The early dynastic kings were frequently shown as bulls and it would appear that for political reasons they adopted the bull cult of the North, particularly Apis who perhaps existed long before the first king of united Egypt.

Harsaphes (Harishaf), a sacred ram, is mentioned in the First Dynasty records on the Palermo Stone. The cult of rams, like the bull worship, was common as early as the First Dynasty and probably for the same reason.

Hathor was a sky and cow goddess who in later times was considered to be the patron of love and joy and was represented as a cow, or woman with a cow's head, or with a human head having the horns and ears of a cow. But in early dynastic times, Hathor seems to have been a female counterpart of Horus, and even in later times her name meant 'House of Horus'. The earliest certain representation of her appears on the palette of Narmer, where she is shown with a human face and a cow's ears and horns.

Khent-Amentiu was a god of the dead at Abydos who was



assimilated with Osiris and in later times represented in a similar fashion.

Matit or Mehit was a lioness goddess of Hieraconpolis and Thinis. She is represented on numerous First Dynasty sealings as a recumbent lioness with three or four bent bars projecting from her back and invariably she is shown in front of a wicker-work shrine which in later times was the determinative sign for the 'Great House' or palace of the king.

Mefdet, a cat goddess, is mentioned in the First Dynasty records on the Palermo Stone. She is depicted in later times as a female figure clad in a cat's skin and was considered a protectress against snake bite.

Min was the tutelary god of travellers and the whole eastern desert was considered his domain. The centre of his worship was at Akhmim and Coptos at the western termination of the great trade route of the Wadi-el-Hammamat. He is represented ithyphallically in human form, wrapped as a mummy, with an upraised arm holding a whip, and wearing a head-dress of two tall plumes. Min was an indigenous deity of great antiquity and two statues of probably predynastic date were found at Coptos. These may be considered the oldest examples of large-scale sculpture in the Nile valley.

Nekhbet was the tutelary goddess of Hieraconpolis (Nekheb, El Kab), and as the influence of the people from this centre spread by conquest she became the guardian deity of Upper Egypt. In later times she is often represented as a woman with a vulture head wearing the white crown, but in the Archaic Period she is always portrayed plainly as a vulture. Nekhbet was the first of the 'Two Ladies' of the *nebti* name of the kings (see page 107).

Nit was the goddess of Sais in the western delta. Her symbol was a shield and crossed arrows, in reference to her character as a hunting and war deity, and this symbol was used even at an early period prior to the Unification. In the period



with which we deal, the worship of Nit was widespread and she was considered one of the principal deities of Lower Egypt. The oldest temple of which we have any direct evidence in the time of Hor-aha (Menes) is that of this goddess. ?  
There is reason to believe that the Thinite kings, in order to legitimize their claim to rule the North, married Lower Egyptian princesses; three of the earliest queens of whom we have knowledge have the name of Nit as part of their names of Nithotep, Meryet-nit, and Her-nit.

?! Sed is mentioned in the First Dynasty records on the Palermo Stone. He was a god of the dead and is perhaps to be identified with Wepwawet, for he is depicted in the same manner as a wolf standing on a 'nome' standard.

Seshat was a goddess of learning and in later times she was believed to record on the leaves of the 'Tree of Heaven' all the deeds and duration of men and gods. Seshat's symbol is a star on a pole surmounted by what appear to be inverted horns. Her worship goes back to the First Dynasty, when the 'stretching of the cord' or the measuring out of the ground plan of a temple by a priest of the goddess is recorded in the annals on the Palermo Stone. This symbolical planning of sacred buildings was apparently one of the functions of Seshat's priesthood.

Thot, a moon god and patron of the sciences, was apparently worshipped as early as the First Dynasty, for the baboon (cynocephalus) was one of his sacred animals in conjunction with Apis on two monuments dated to the reign of Udimu. The standard of Thot also appears on palettes of the Predynastic period and a shrine of this god certainly existed in the time of Narmer.

Wadjet was the cobra goddess of Buto and the guardian of Lower Egypt. She was the second of the 'Two Ladies' of the royal *nebti* name.

Wepwawet, 'Opener-of-ways', appears originally to have

been a war-god who led the king to battle, but in later times he became a god of the dead, and as such was assimilated to Anubis. He is depicted as a wolf standing on a nome-standard.

Most of the gods of the Archaic Period of whom we have cognisance are presented in animal or fetish form, but already in the Second Dynasty anthropomorphization was developing and we have examples of Horus and Set in human form but with bird and animal heads.

To sum up, even the limited amount of material at present available shows that very many of the gods well-known in later times were already in existence during the period of the first two dynasties. Their characteristics were perhaps different, as in many cases the process of assimilation was only in its early stages; but the main outline of the religious conceptions of a later age are already discernible. The two great cults of Rē and Osiris were already in rival development, side by side, and although the third great religion of Set was doomed to ultimate disfavour, in this early period it had a vast following. Efforts to rationalize the theologies were taking place, but the inconsistencies of which we have evidence in archaic times were never to be satisfactorily removed.

#### WORSHIP AND RITUAL

Of the method of worship and religious ritual we have no evidence, but it probably differed little from that of later ages with the service to the god performed by priests in the seclusion of the sanctuary and with the people excluded from the innermost parts of the temple. The people saw only the statue or fetish of the god when it was brought out in processions on the days of festival. Judging from the records on the Palermo Stone, the festivals of many gods were of considerable frequency and it is obvious that the observance of religion was just as important in the life of the newly united

nation as it was in many hundreds of years of Egypt's history. Of the temples we have little knowledge beyond crude representations on labels and jar-sealings. They appear to have been rather primitive wooden structures, and such was the conservatism of the Egyptians that even at a time when they were capable of building such well-designed and balanced structures as the great tombs at Sakkara for the actual house of the god, they may have retained the ancient designs of their forefathers. Indeed the design of these ancient religious buildings survives in the structures which were the innermost sanctuaries of the temples of later times. It is probable that even in the Archaic Period the wooden house of the god as shown on the wooden label of Hor-aha, represented the actual shrine of Nit with perhaps a massive temple structure surrounding it.

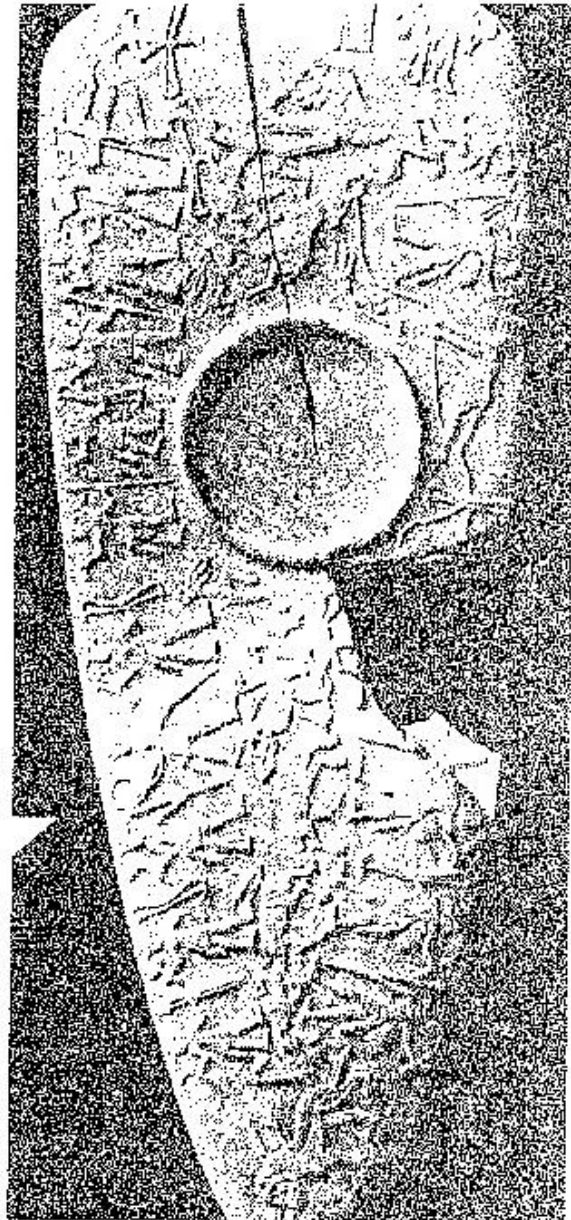
## BURIAL CUSTOMS

The burial customs of the master race of Archaic Egypt were, like their religious beliefs, fundamentally the same as those of their descendants of later times. But during the greater part of the period under review, the mass of the population descended from the indigenes followed the mortuary customs of their forebears, only adopting the methods of burial of their superiors towards the end of the Second Dynasty, and then only in the metropolitan areas where racial fusion had developed to a large extent.

Whatever his religious beliefs, the Egyptian firmly believed in life after death, and whether he travelled with the sun-god in the heavens or dwelt with Osiris in the underworld he believed that a certain vital part of him continued to exist in the neighbourhood of the body. The body must therefore be preserved so that this vital force could return to it and be sustained in every comfort by food and drink, furniture, games,

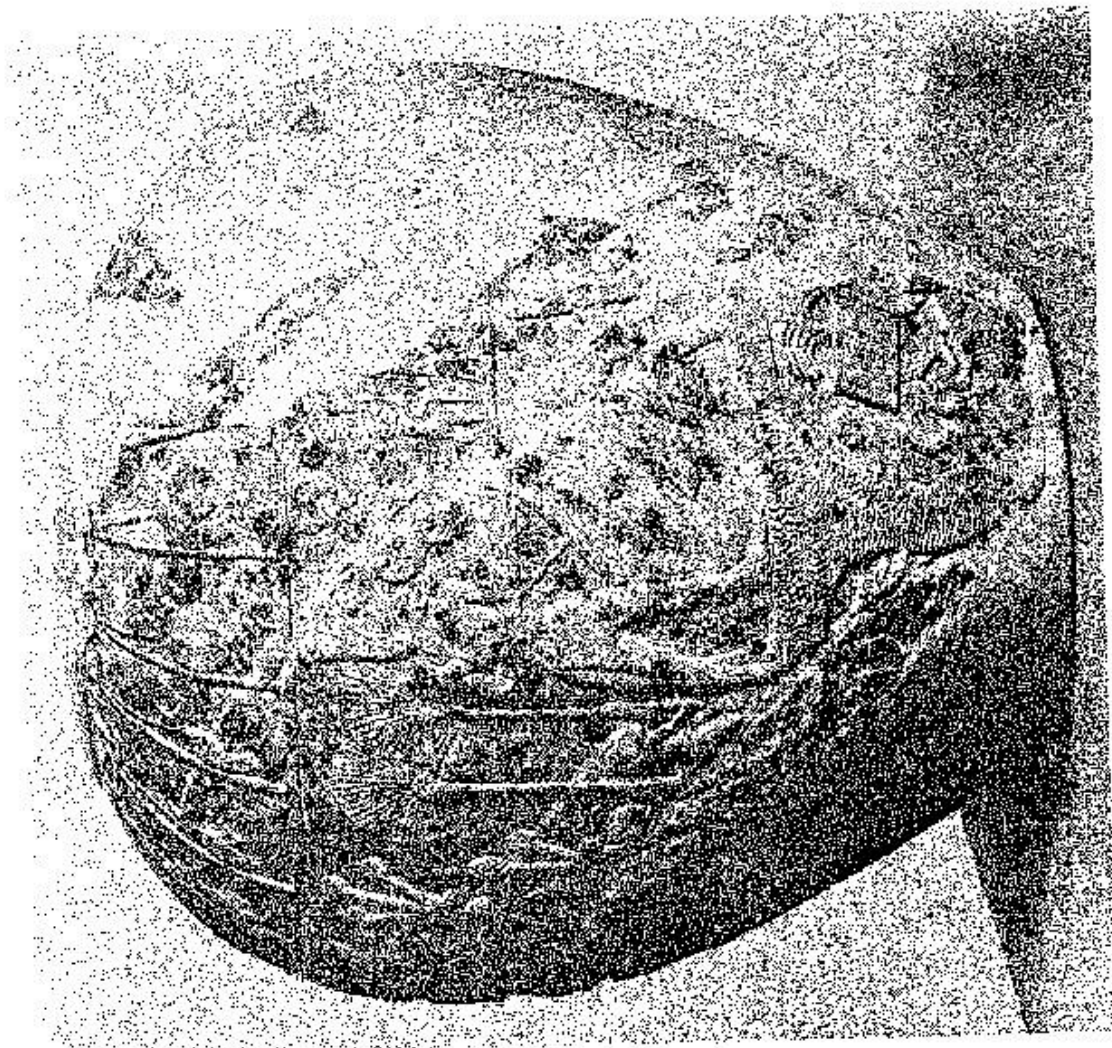


(a) Carved ivory handle of the  
Gebel-el-Arak knife

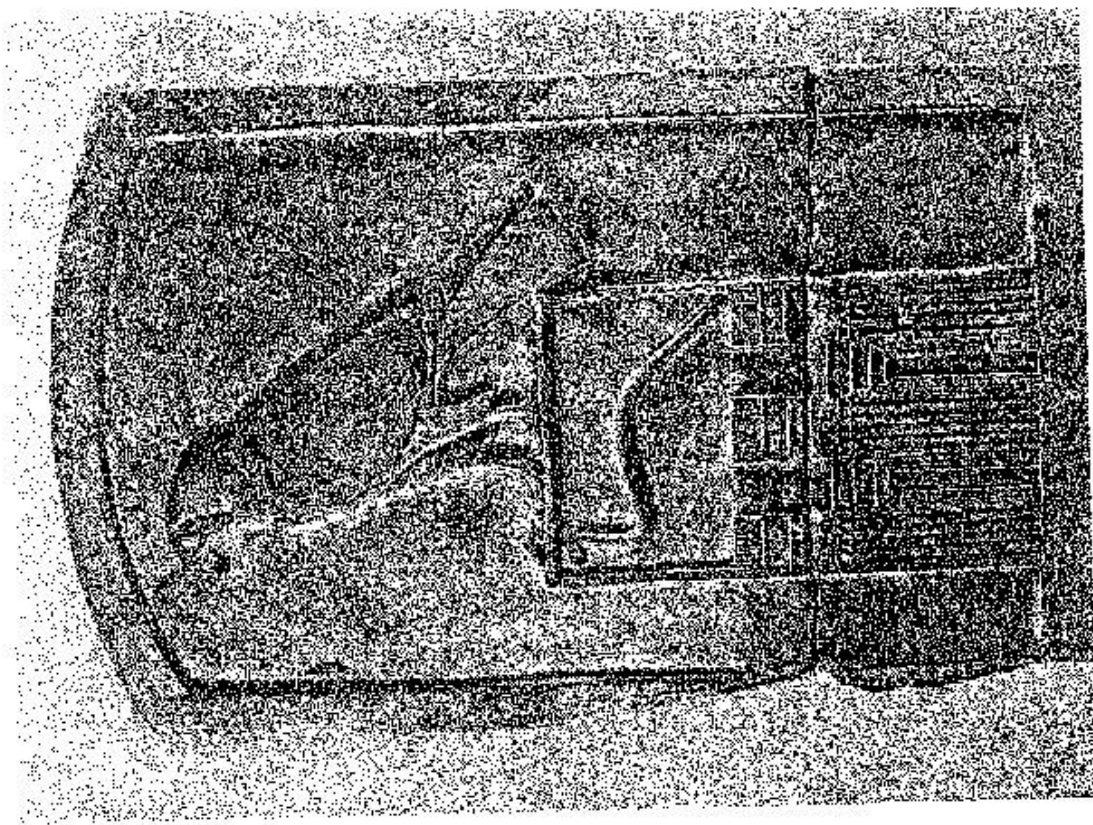


(b) The Hunter's palette



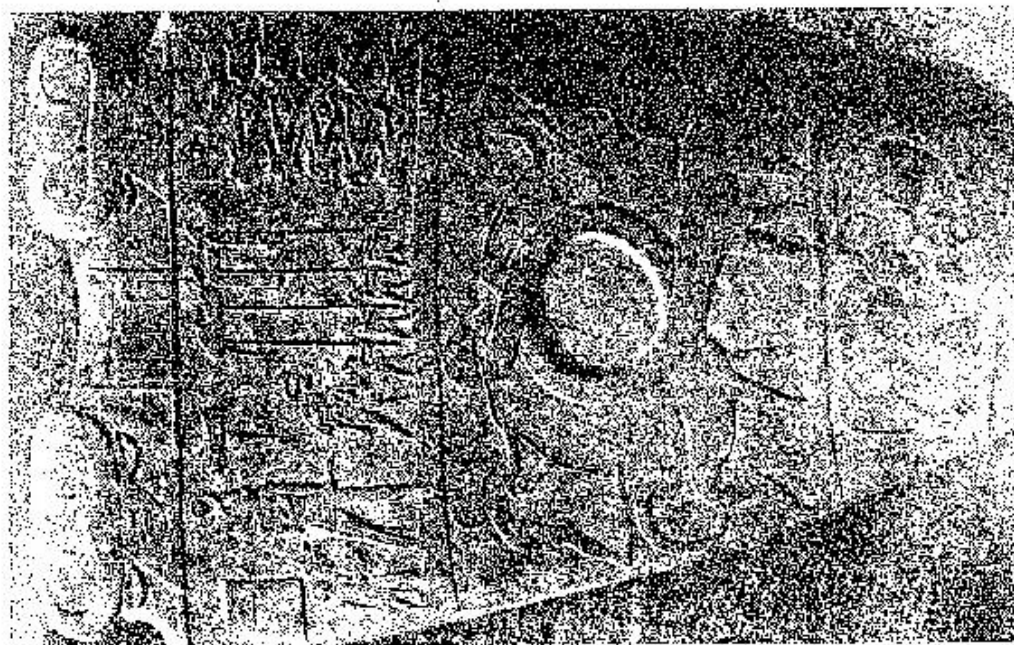


(a) Ceremonial mace head of the Scorpion King

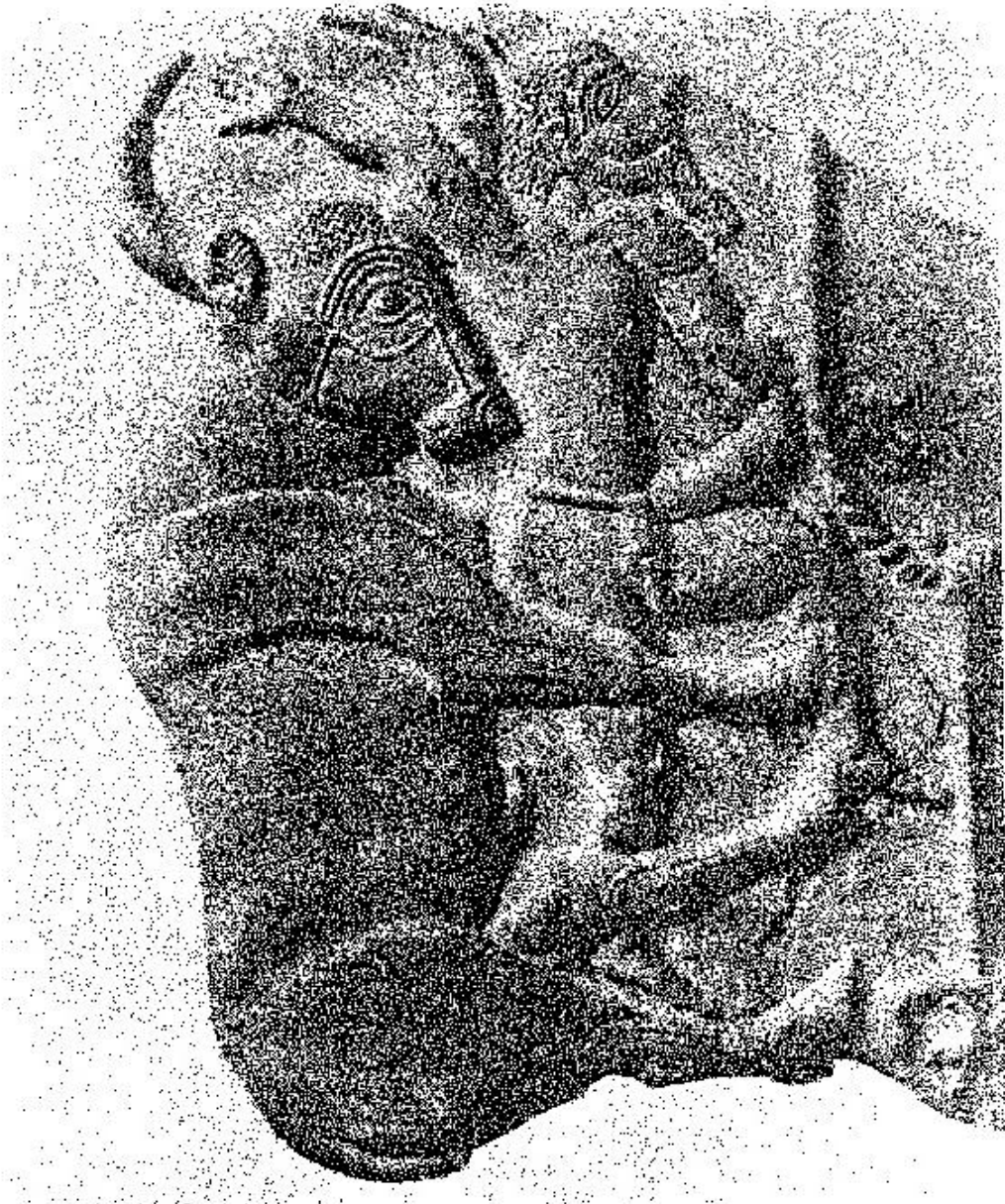


(b) Funerary stela of Uadji

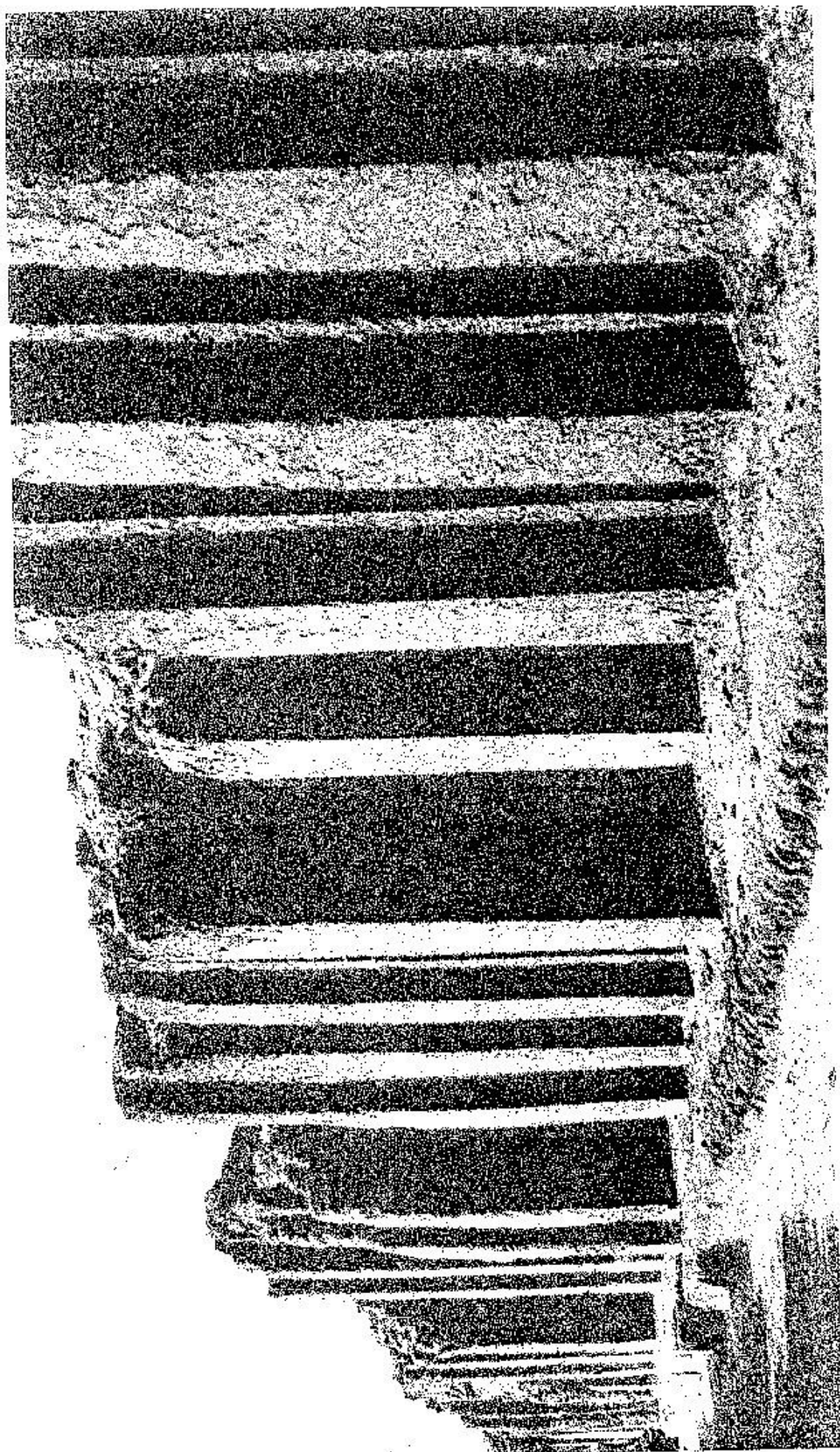




(a) Ceremonial palette of Narmer

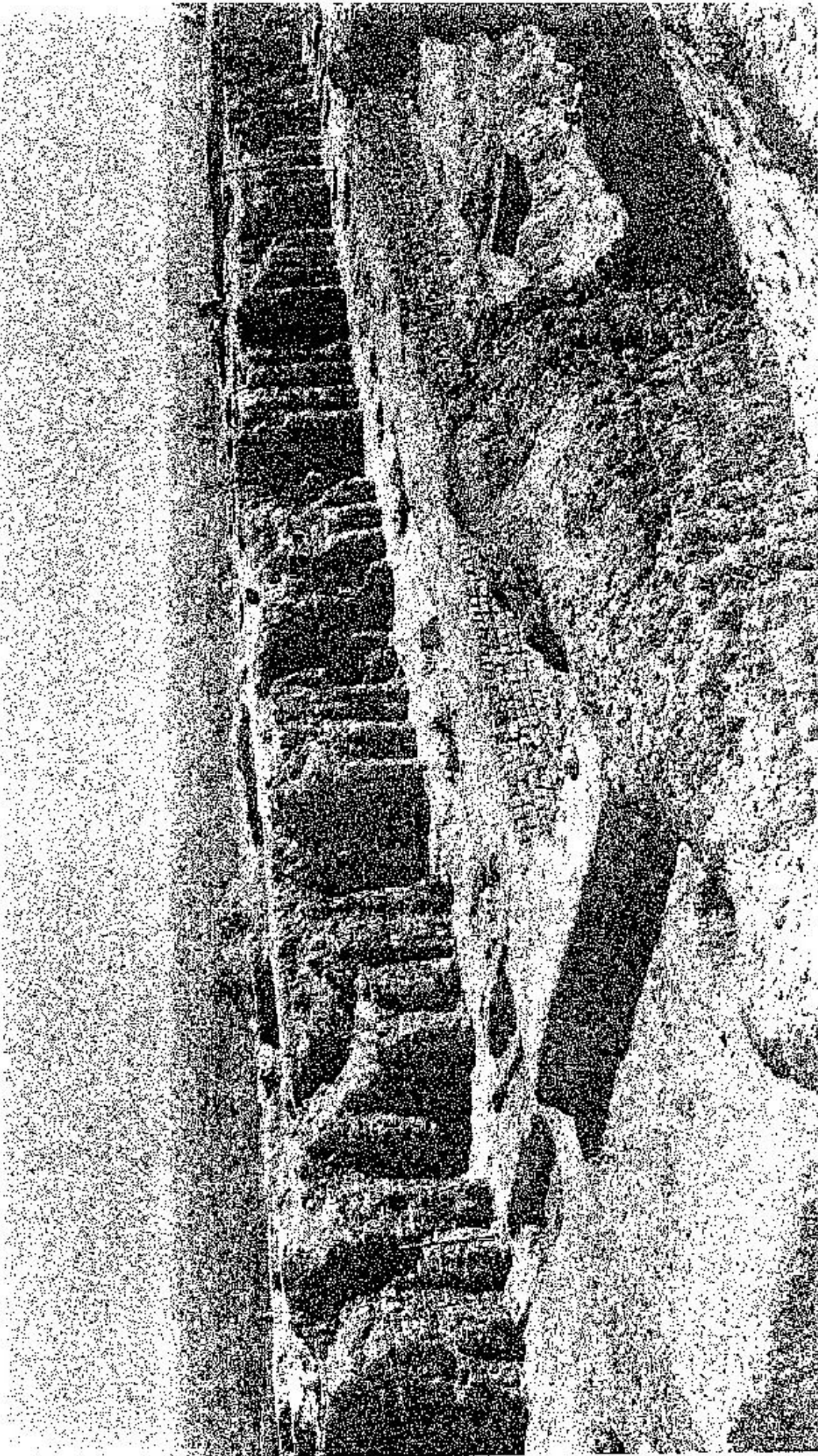


(b) Fragment of a ceremonial palette

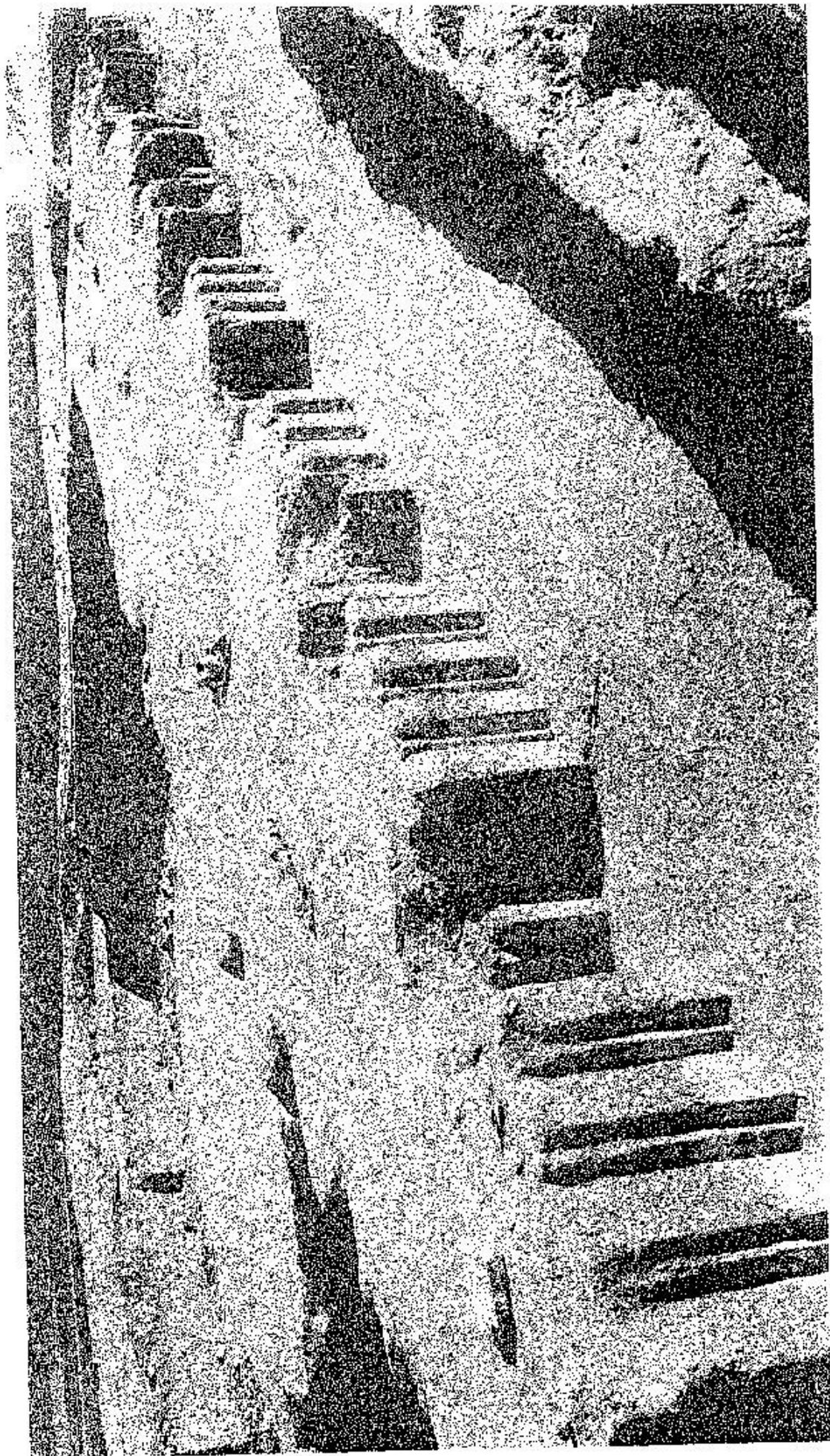


East façade of the tomb of Queen Her-nit at Sakkara



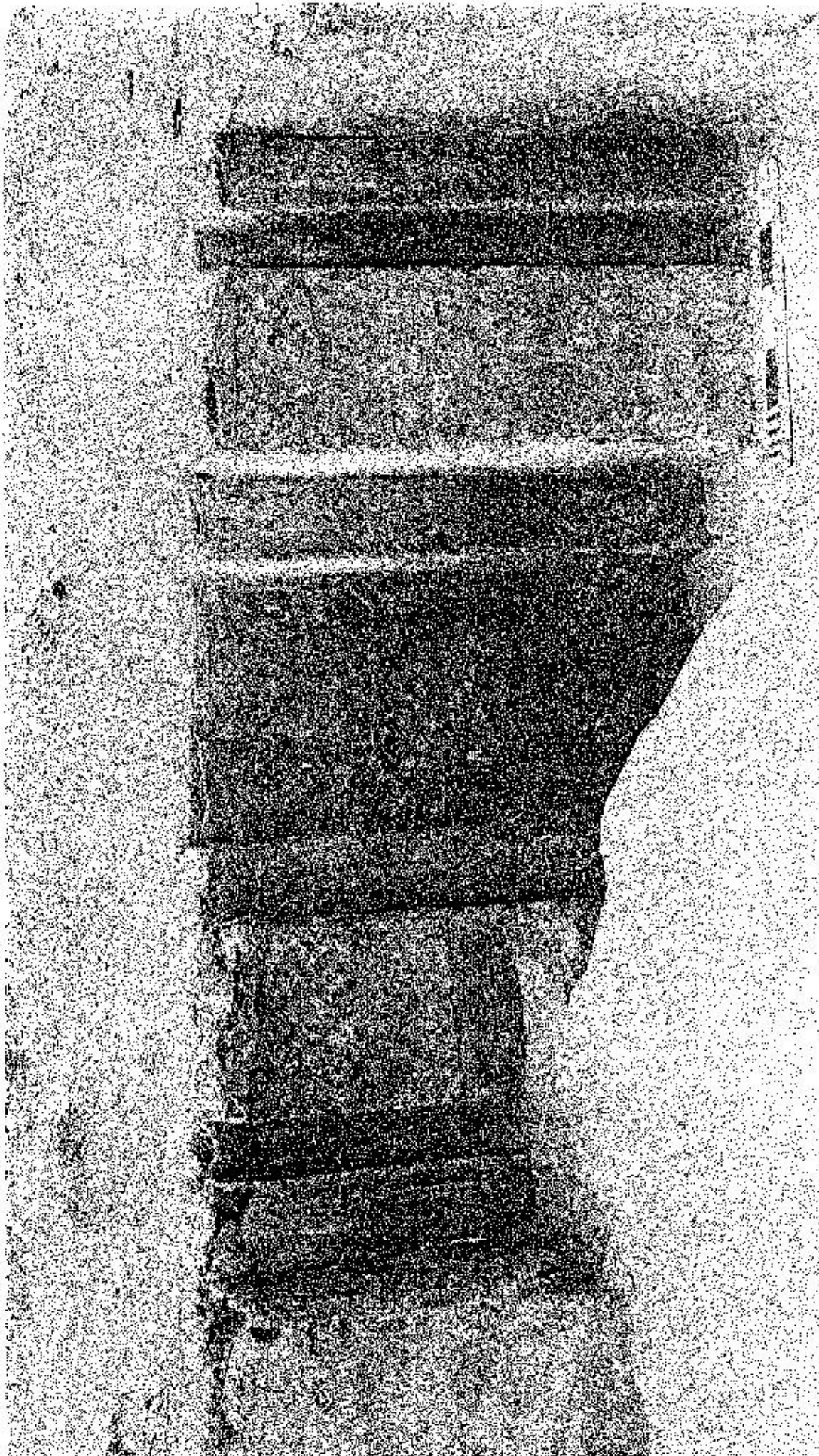


West façade of the tomb of Queen Meryet-nit at Sakkarā



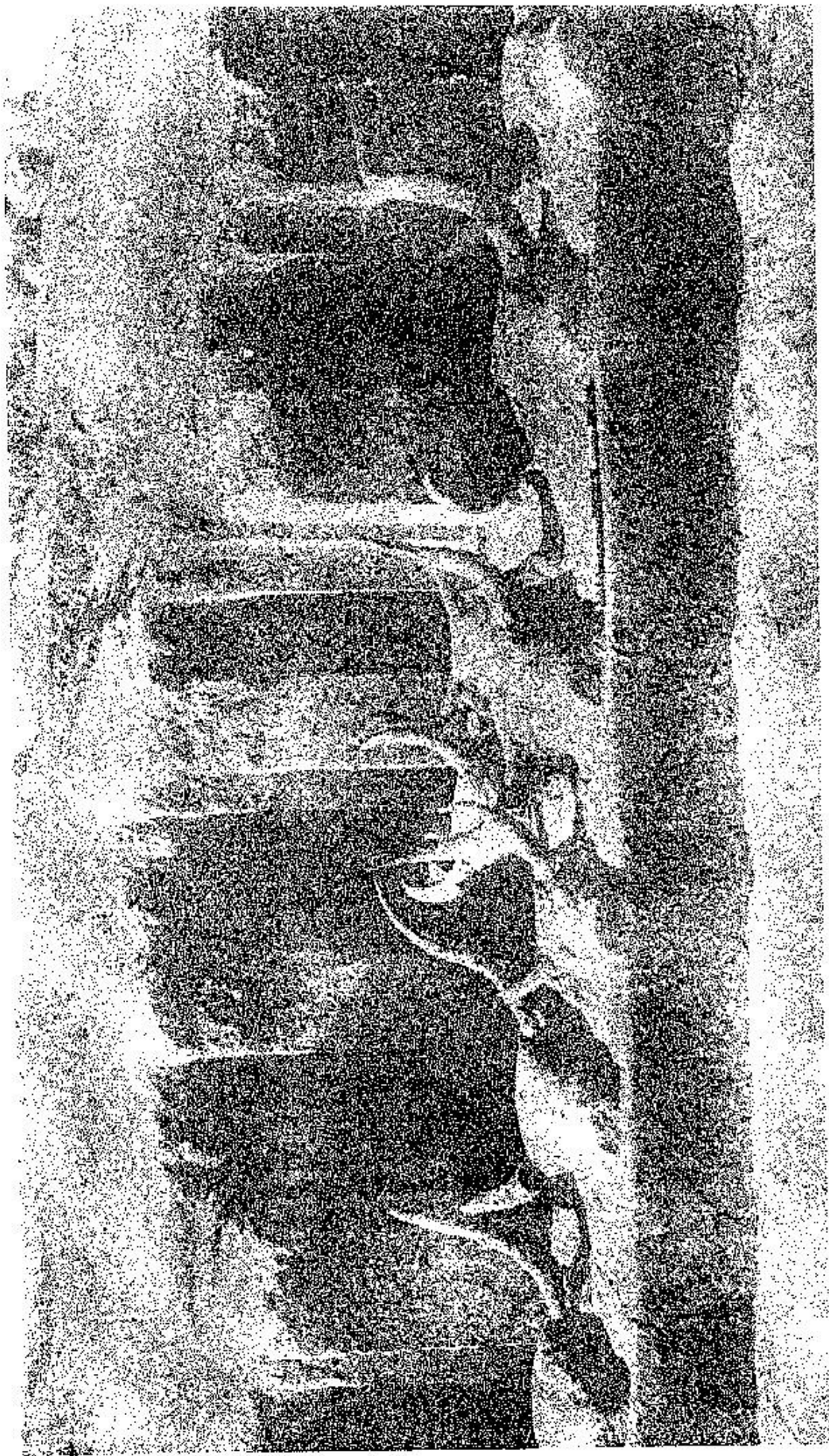
East façade of Tomb 3506 at Sakara





Painted decoration preserved on the façade of the tomb of Ka'a at Sakkara



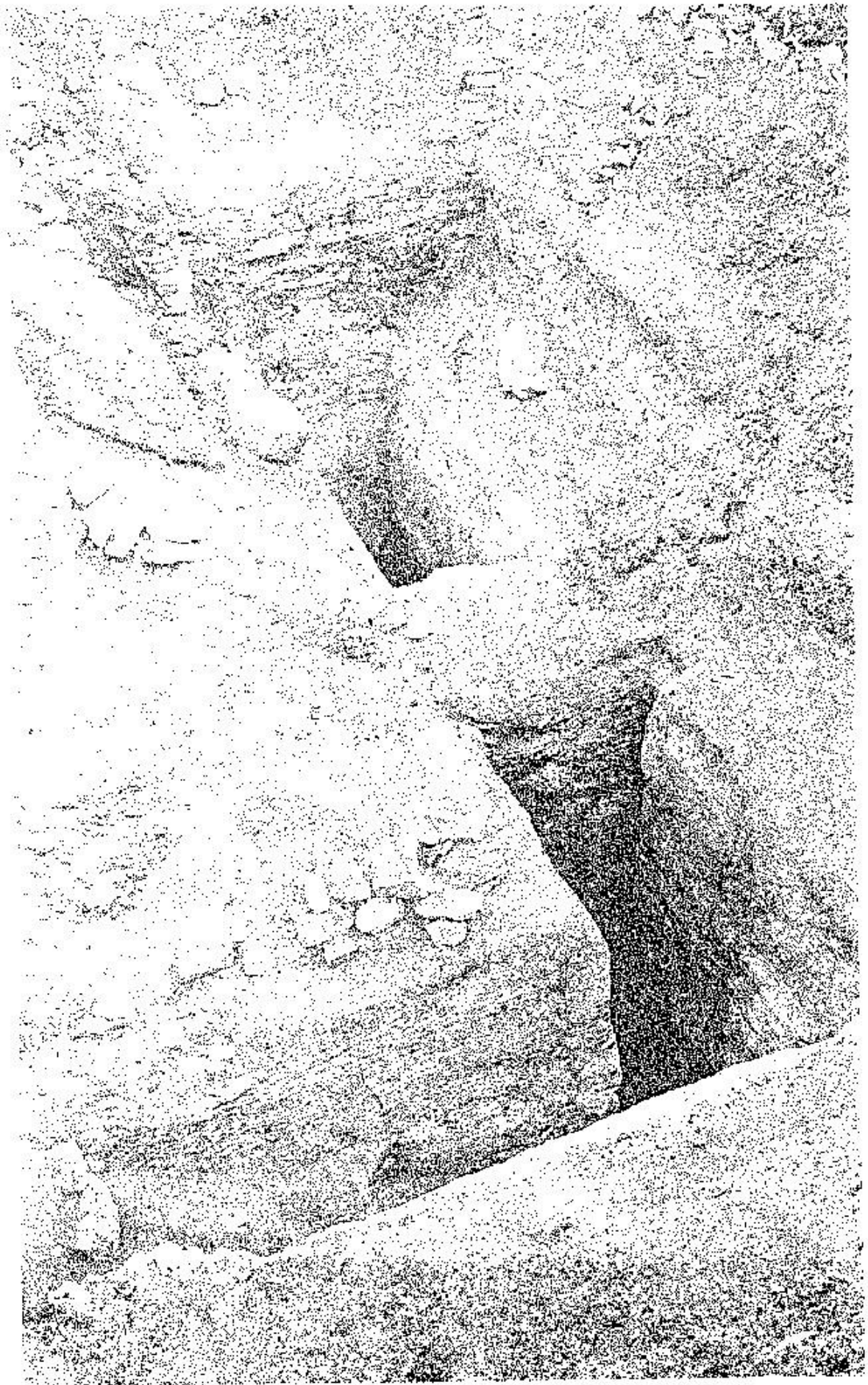


Part of the bulls' heads bench of the east façade of the tomb of Uadji at Sakkara

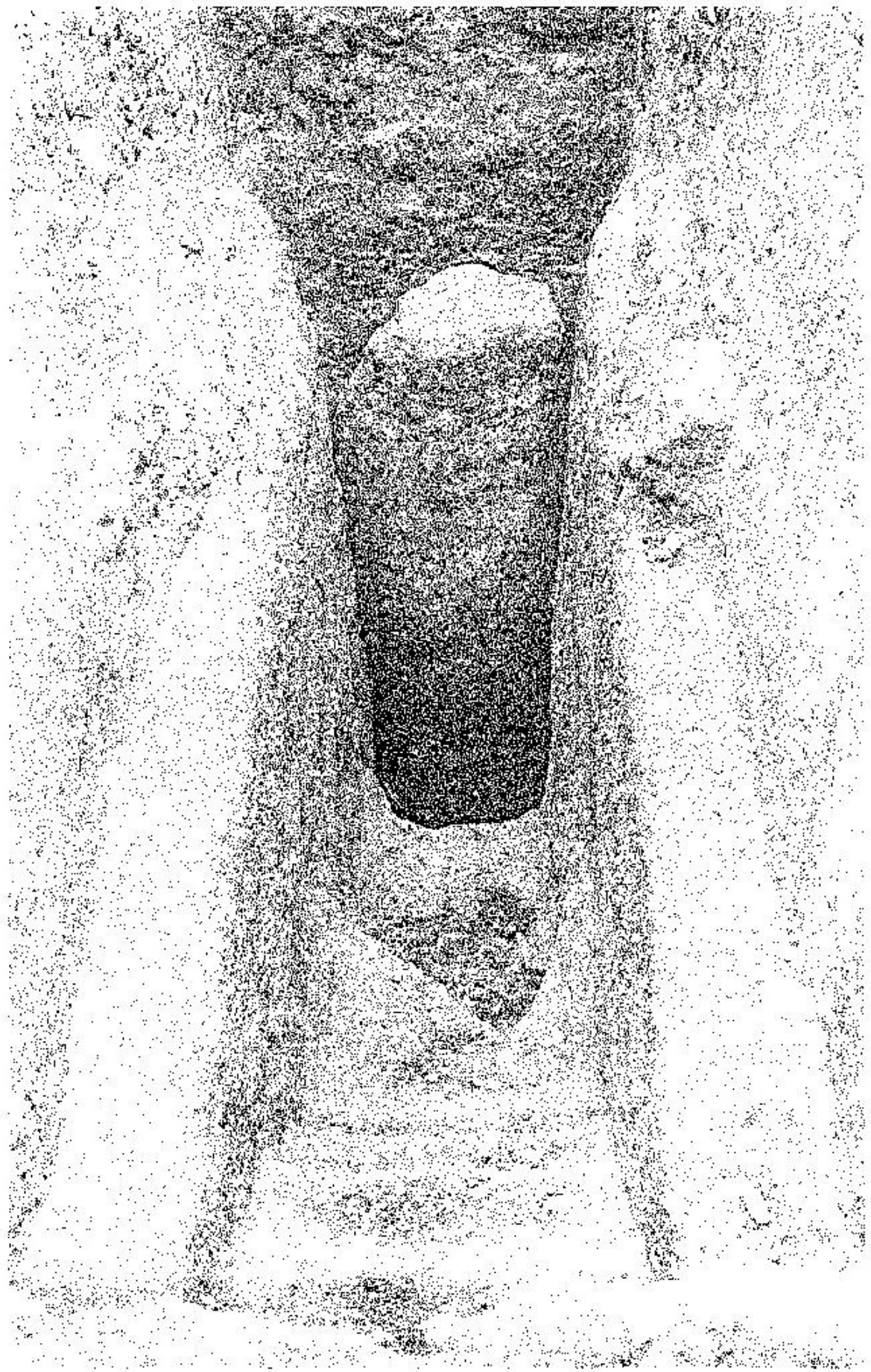


The bulls' heads bench from above





Entrance stairway of a typical Second Dynasty tomb at Sakkara



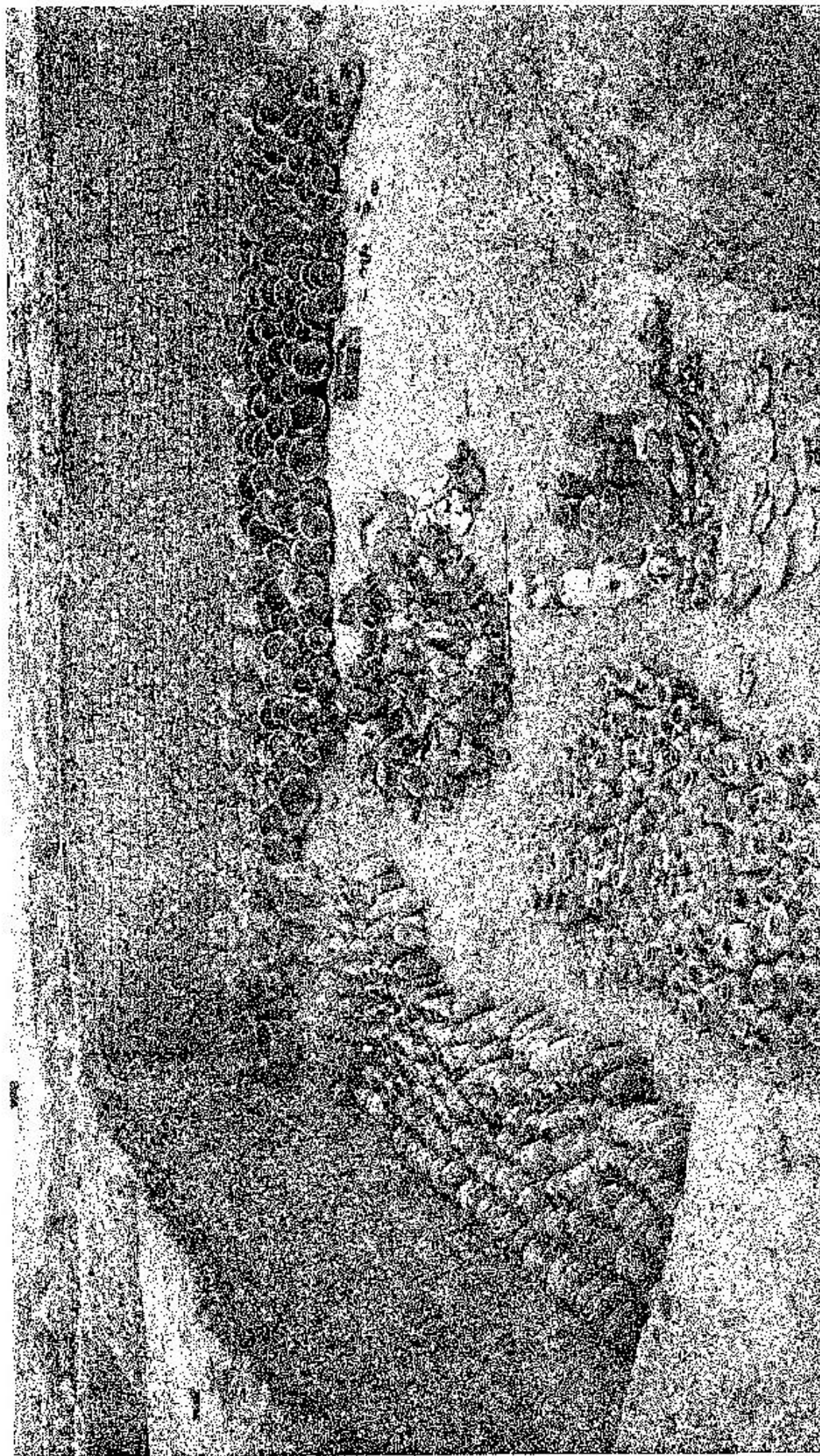
Portcullis blocking before the burial chamber of a Second Dynasty tomb  
at Sakkara





Clearing the filling of the interior of the superstructure of a Second Dynasty tomb which contained scattered groups of pottery



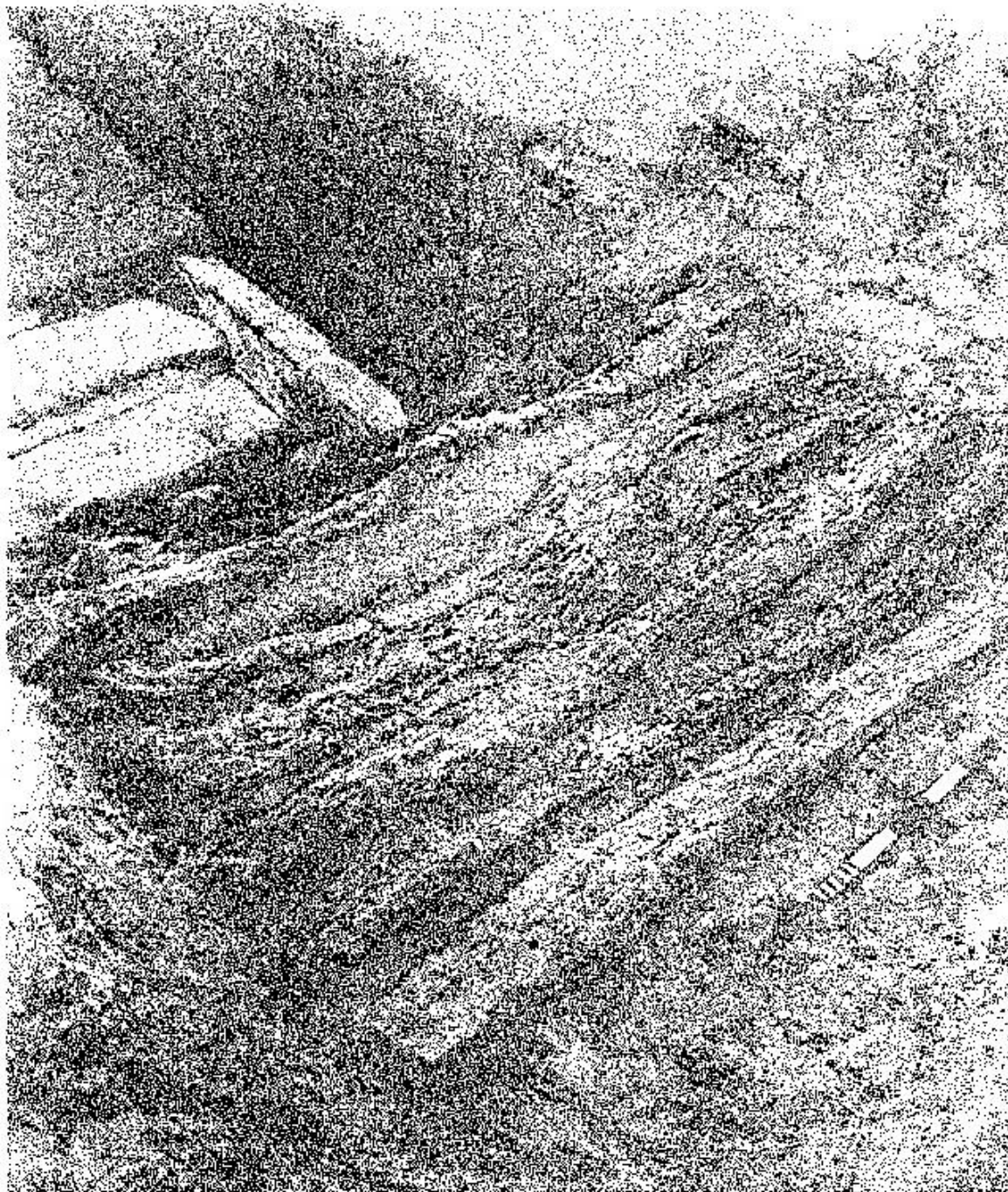


The interior of the superstructure after excavation with some of the pottery discovered in it

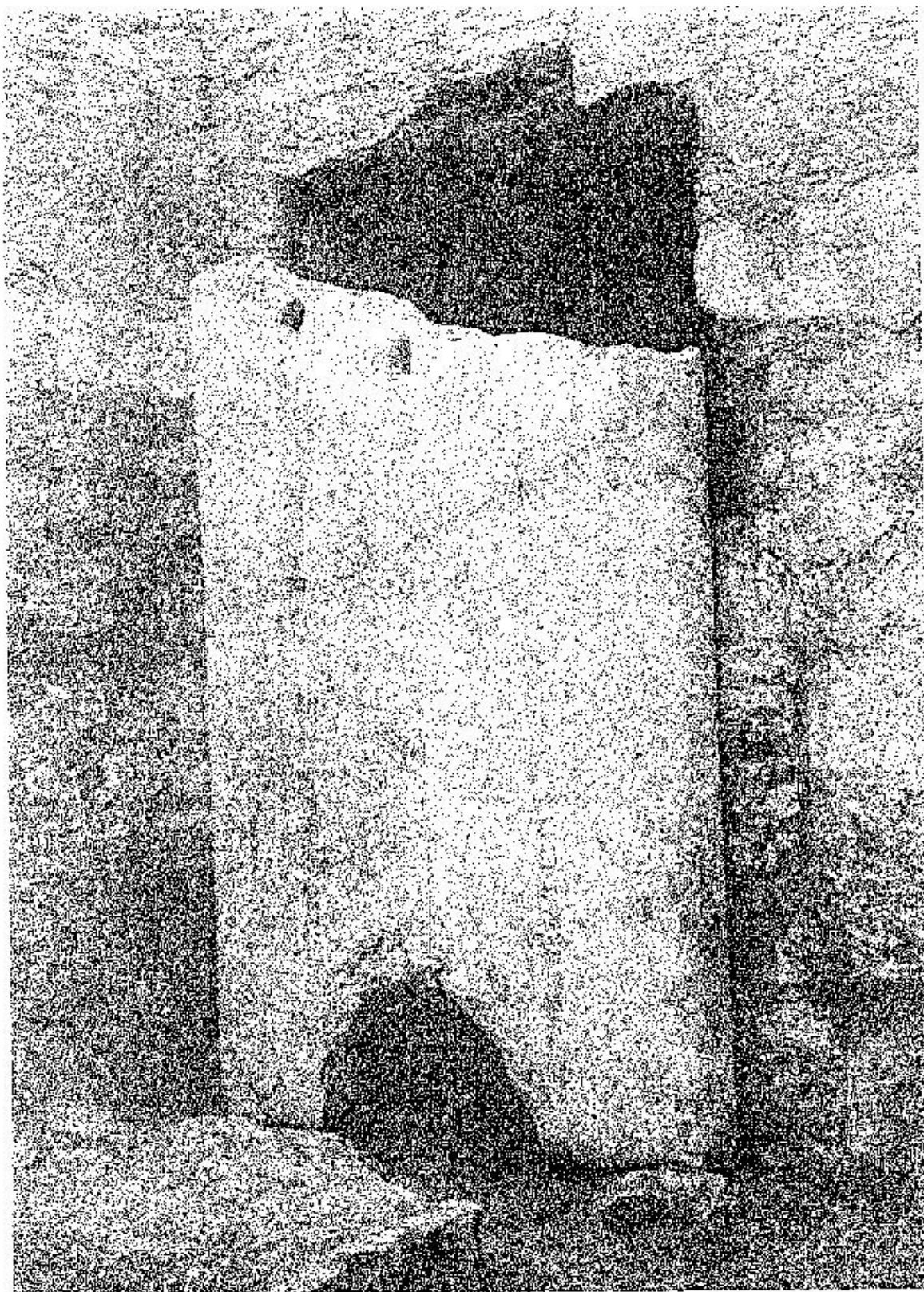


Stone flooring in the funerary temple of Ka'a at Sakkara



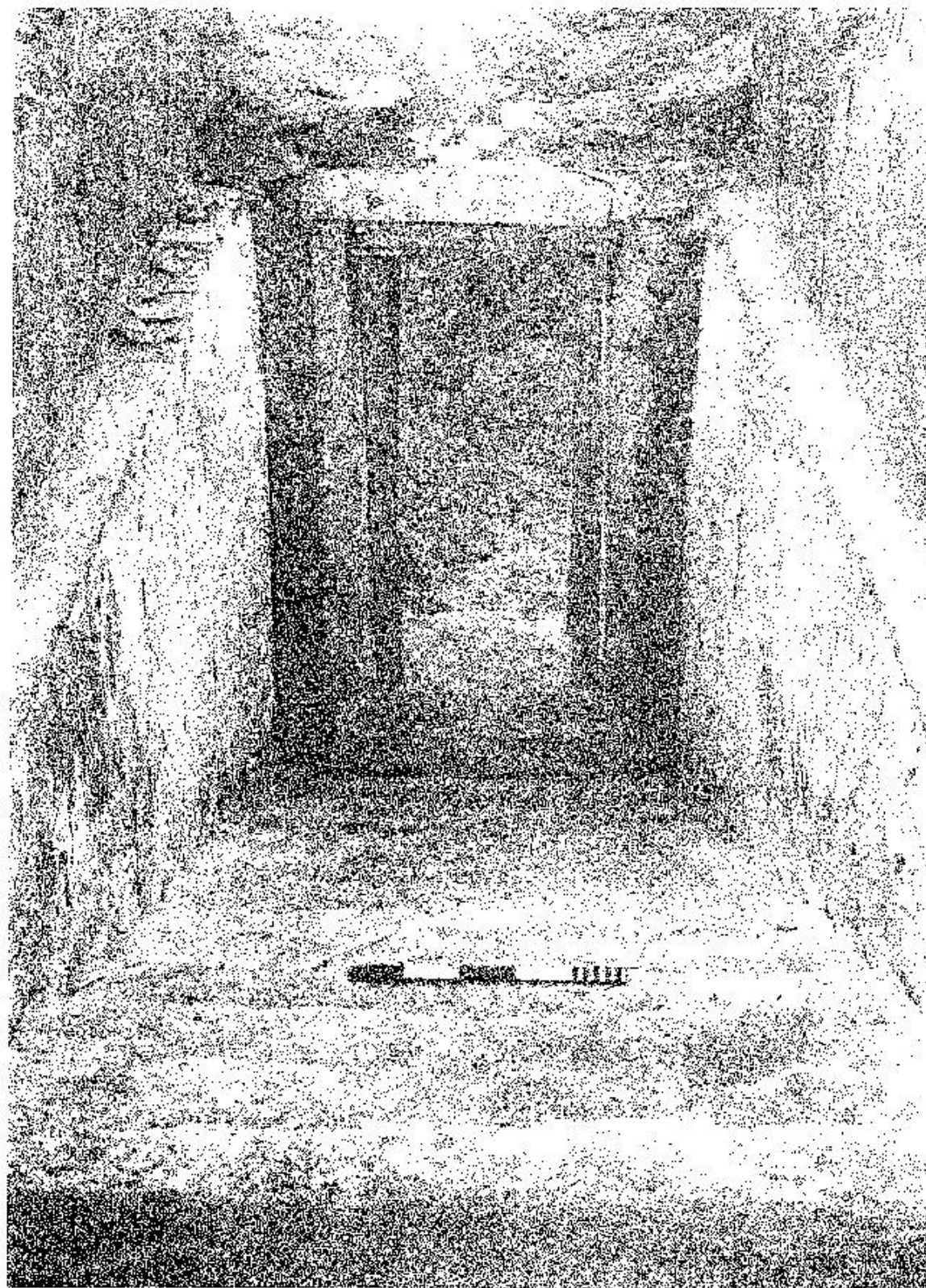


Timber roofing over the entrance stairway of Tomb 3506 at Sakkara.



Portcullis blocking before the entrance of the burial chamber of Tomb  
3035 at Sakkara



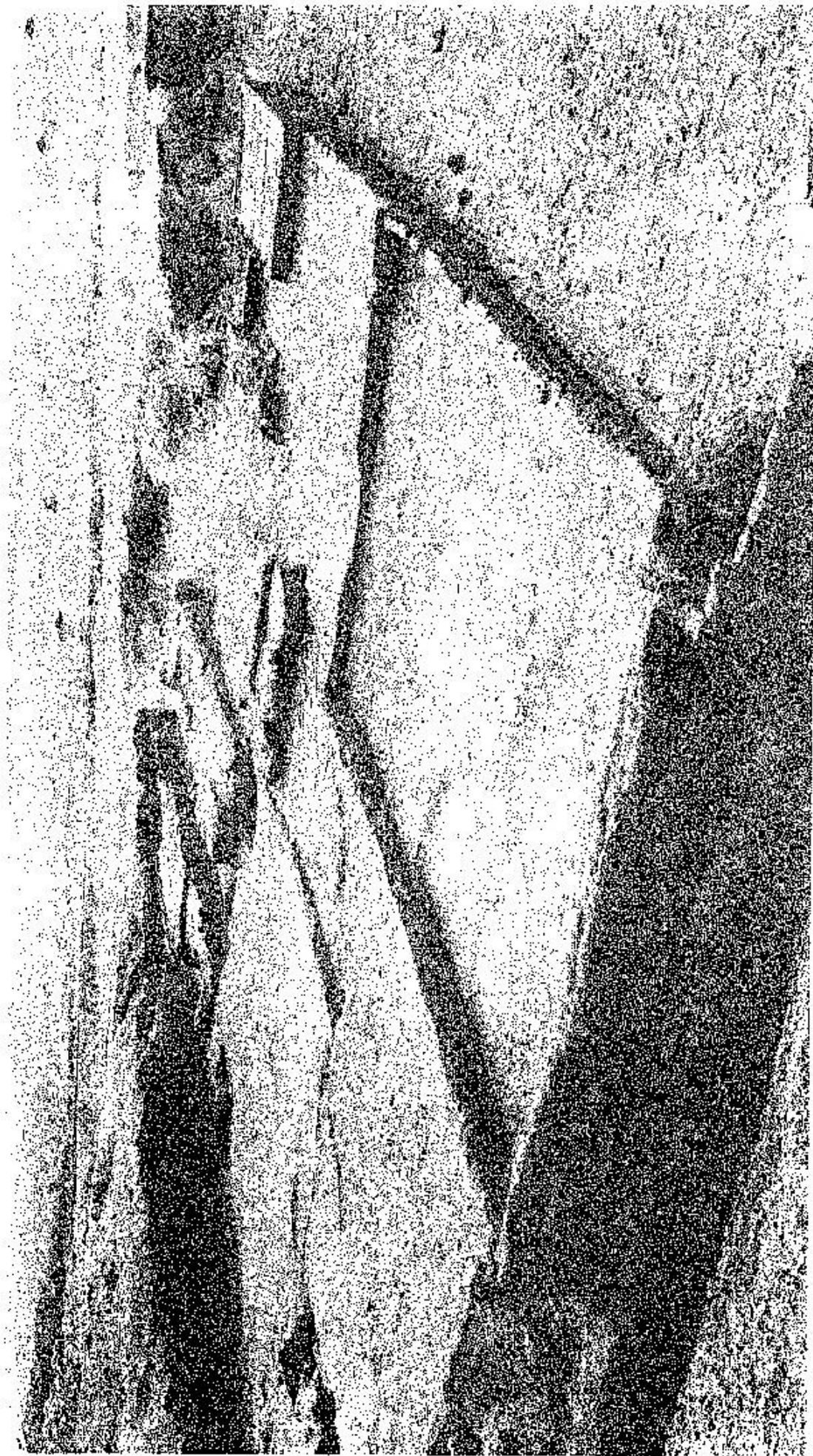


Stairway and stone built gate of Tomb 3506 at Sakkara



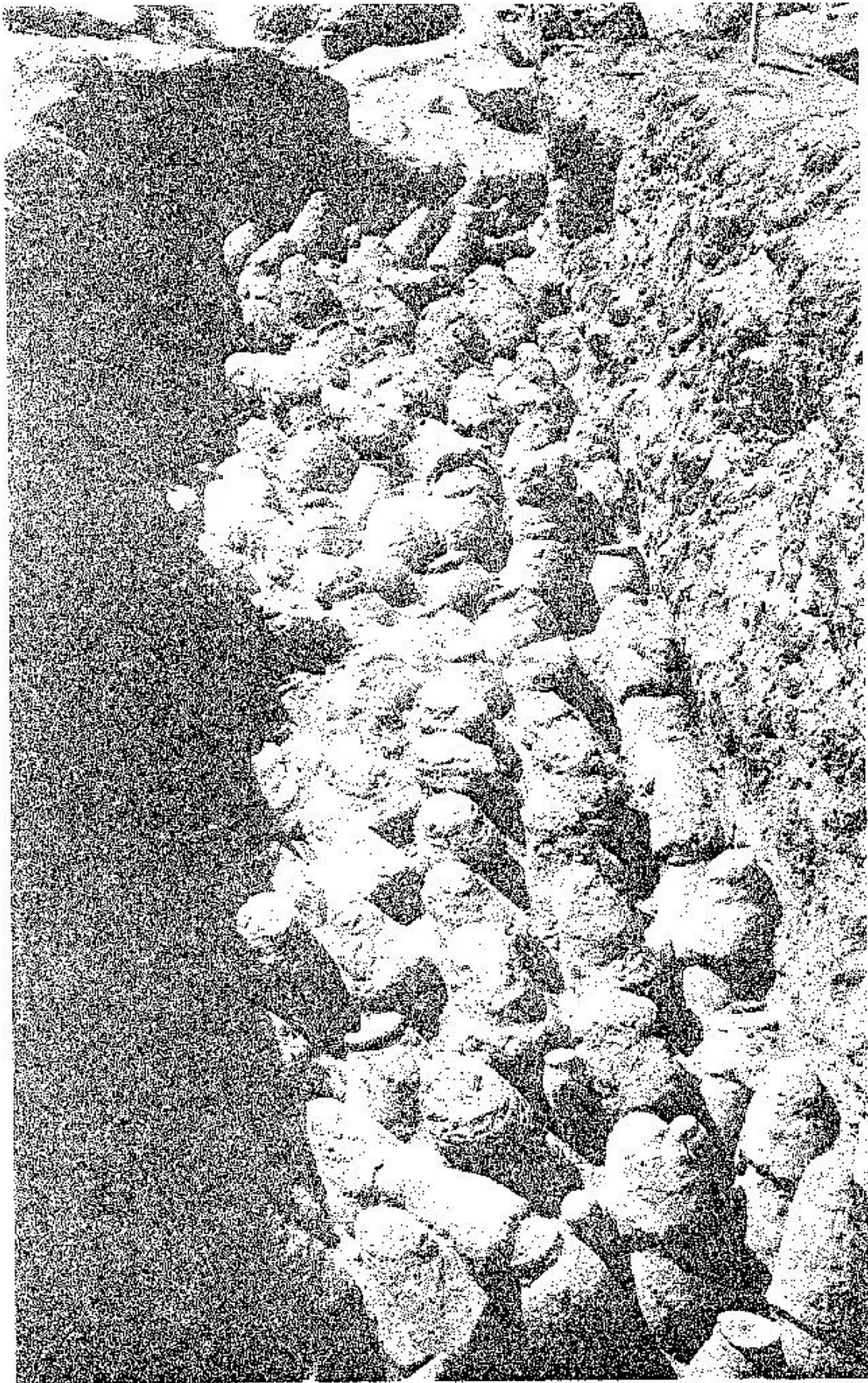


A First Dynasty boat grave partly buried beneath a Third Dynasty tomb at Sakkarā



The model estate of Hor-aha at Sakkara



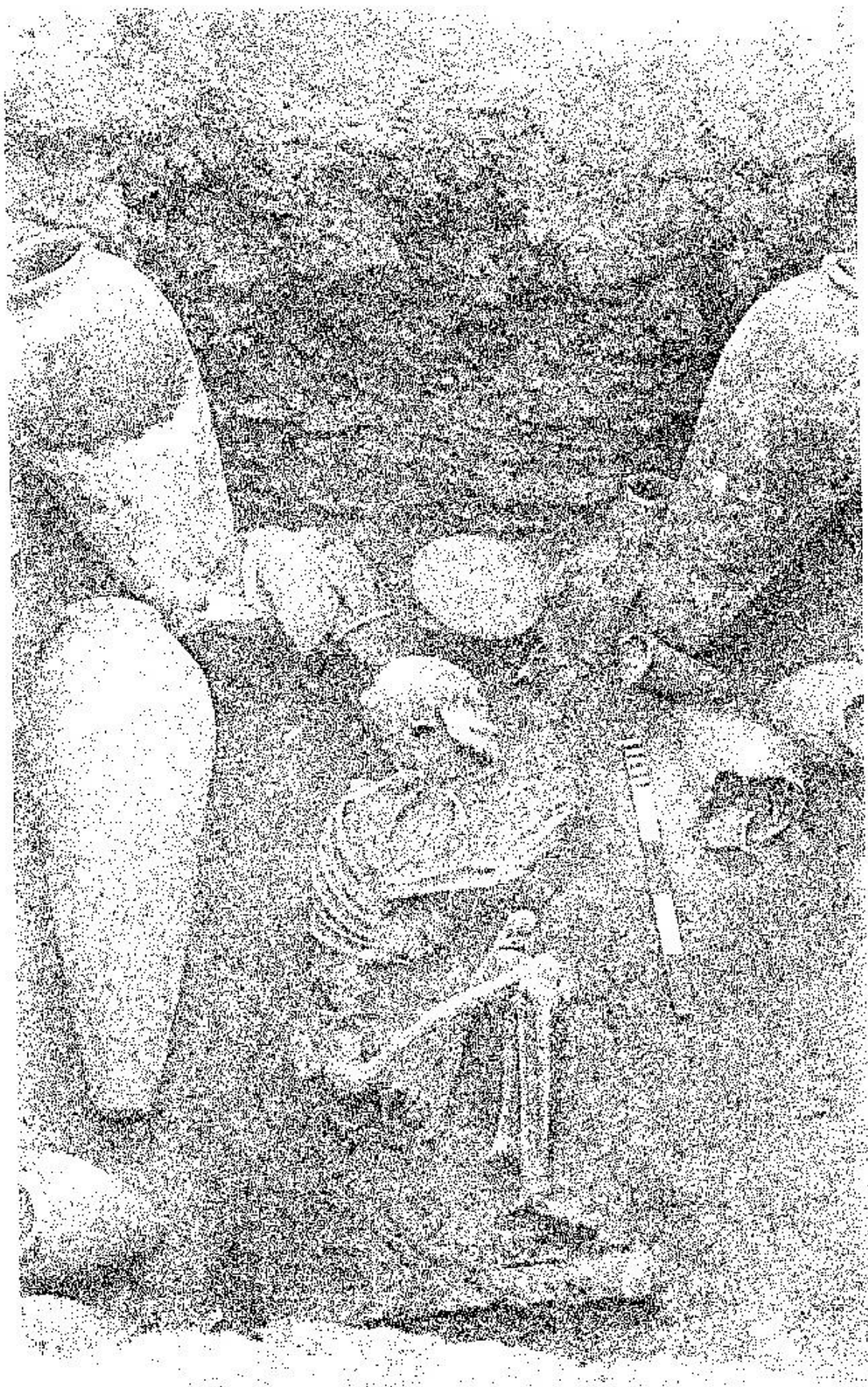


Wine jars stored in one of the substructure magazines of a First Dynasty tomb at Sakkara

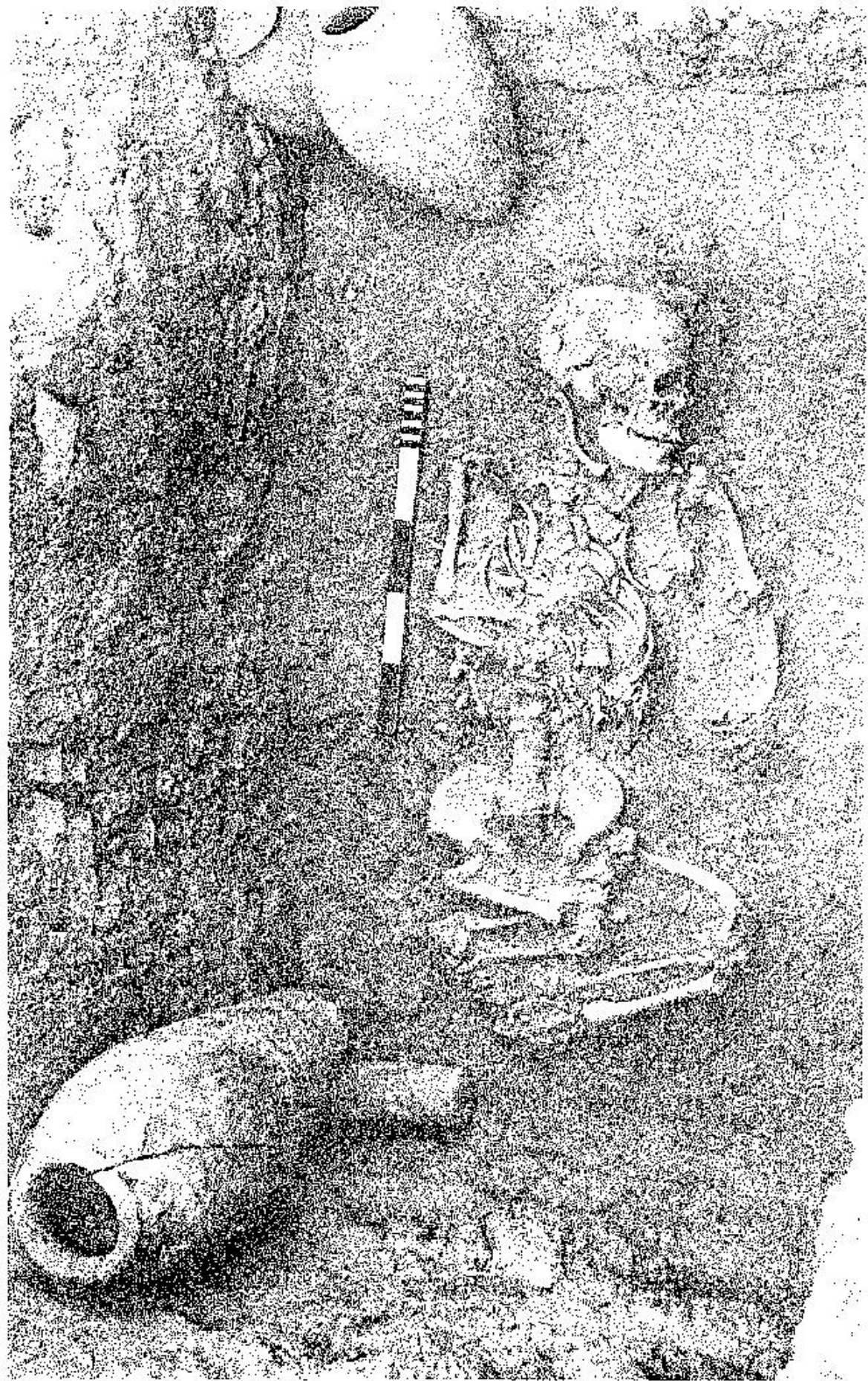


Wooden flooring of the burial chamber of a First Dynasty tomb at Sakkara



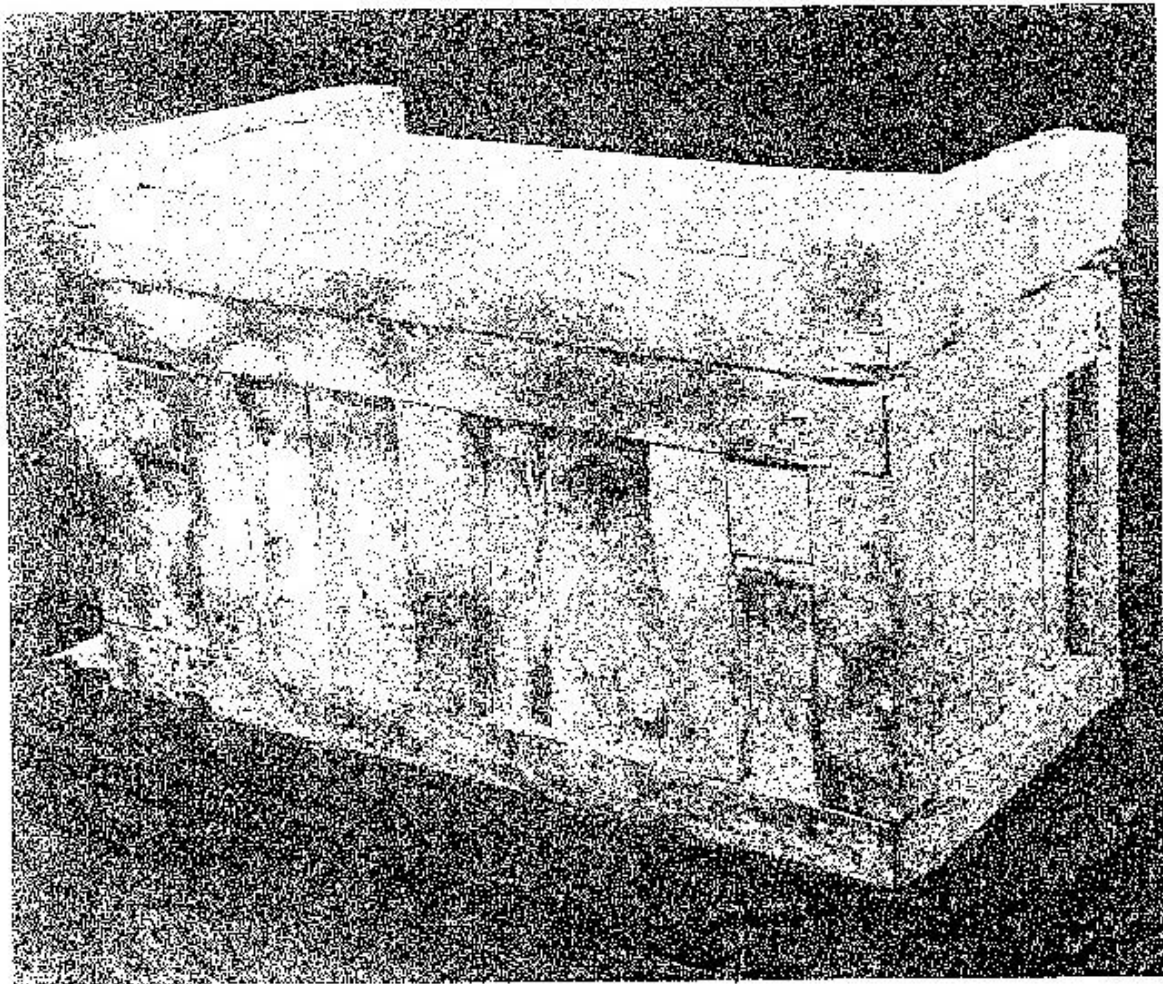


A subsidiary burial of the early First Dynasty

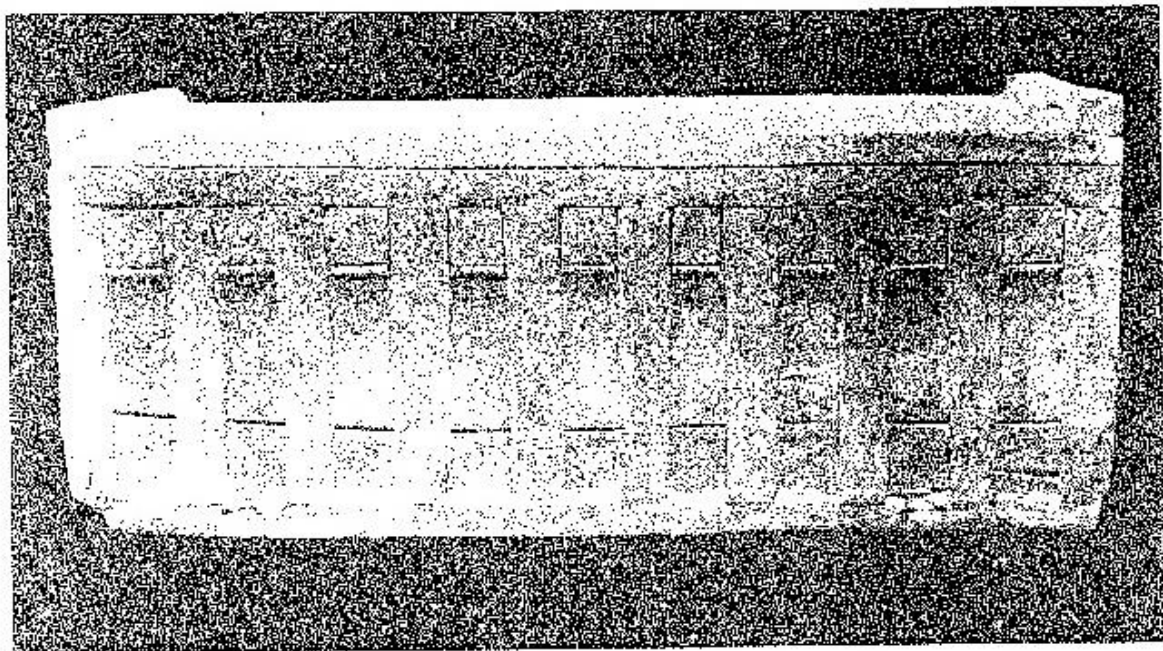


Subsidiary burial of the early First Dynasty, containing the skeleton of a dwarf





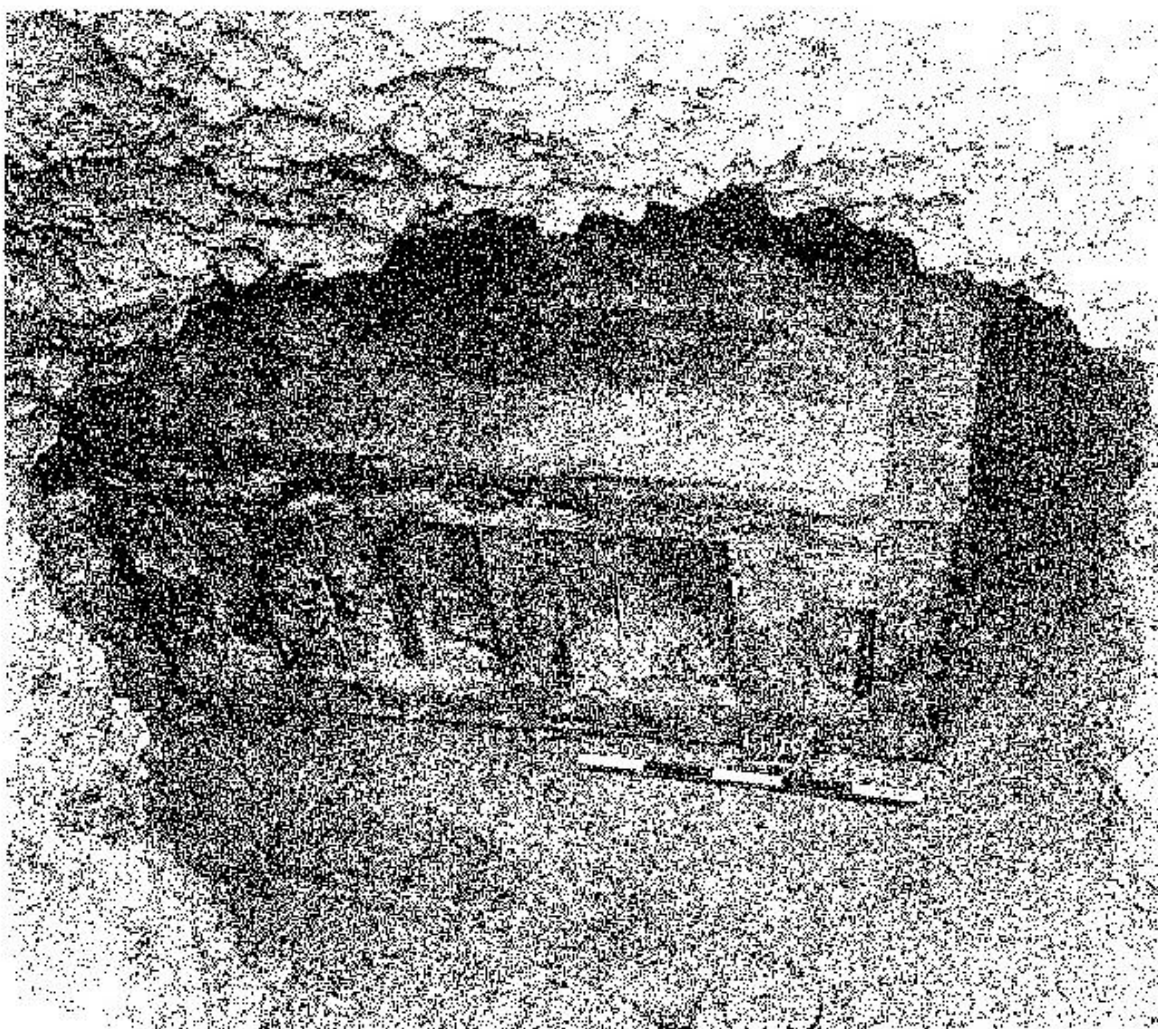
(a) Wooden coffin for a contracted burial, Second Dynasty



(b) Wooden coffin for an extended burial, Second Dynasty



(a) Uncoffined 'mummy' of the Second Dynasty

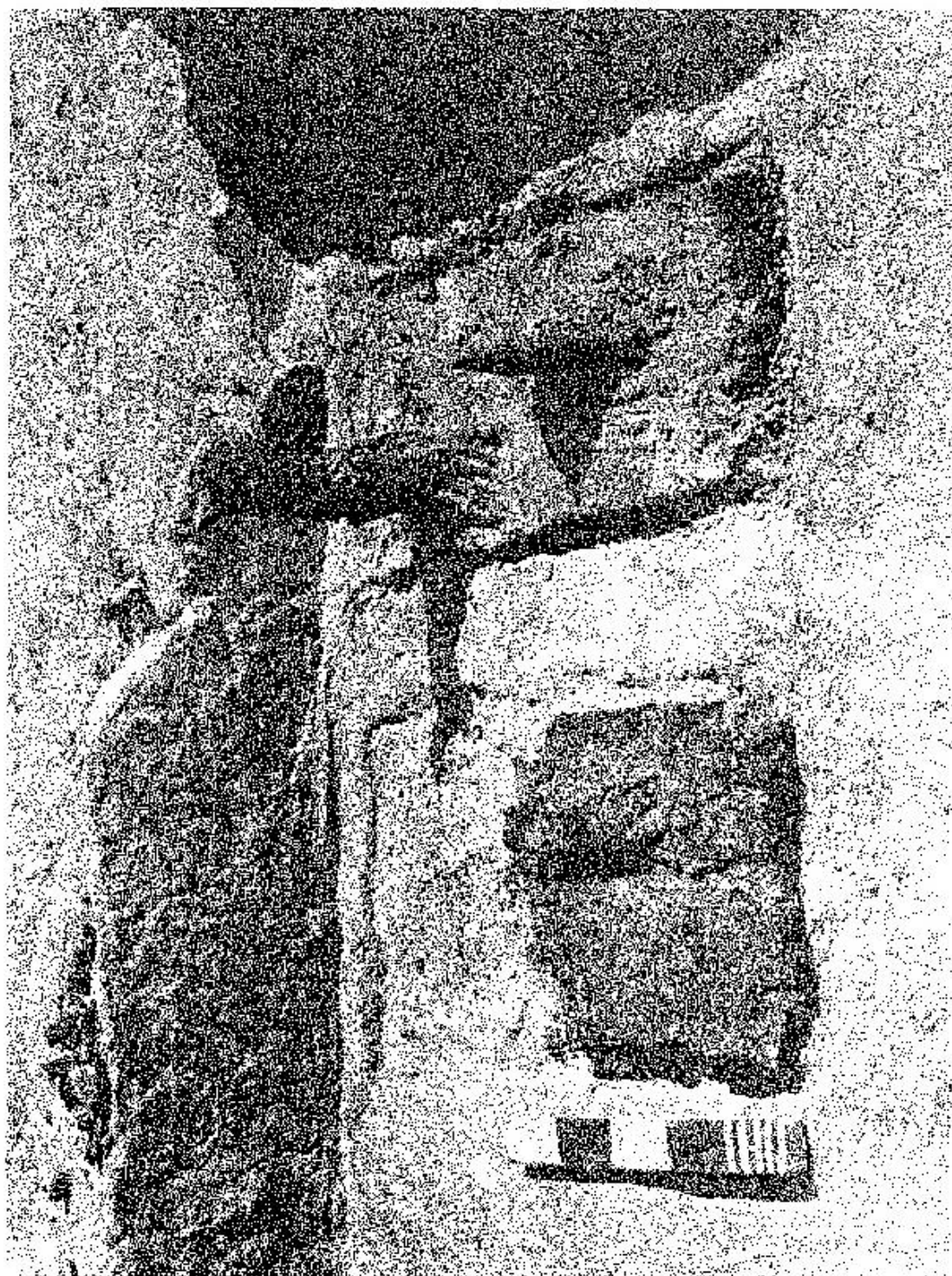


(b) Coffin in a burial niche of the Second Dynasty



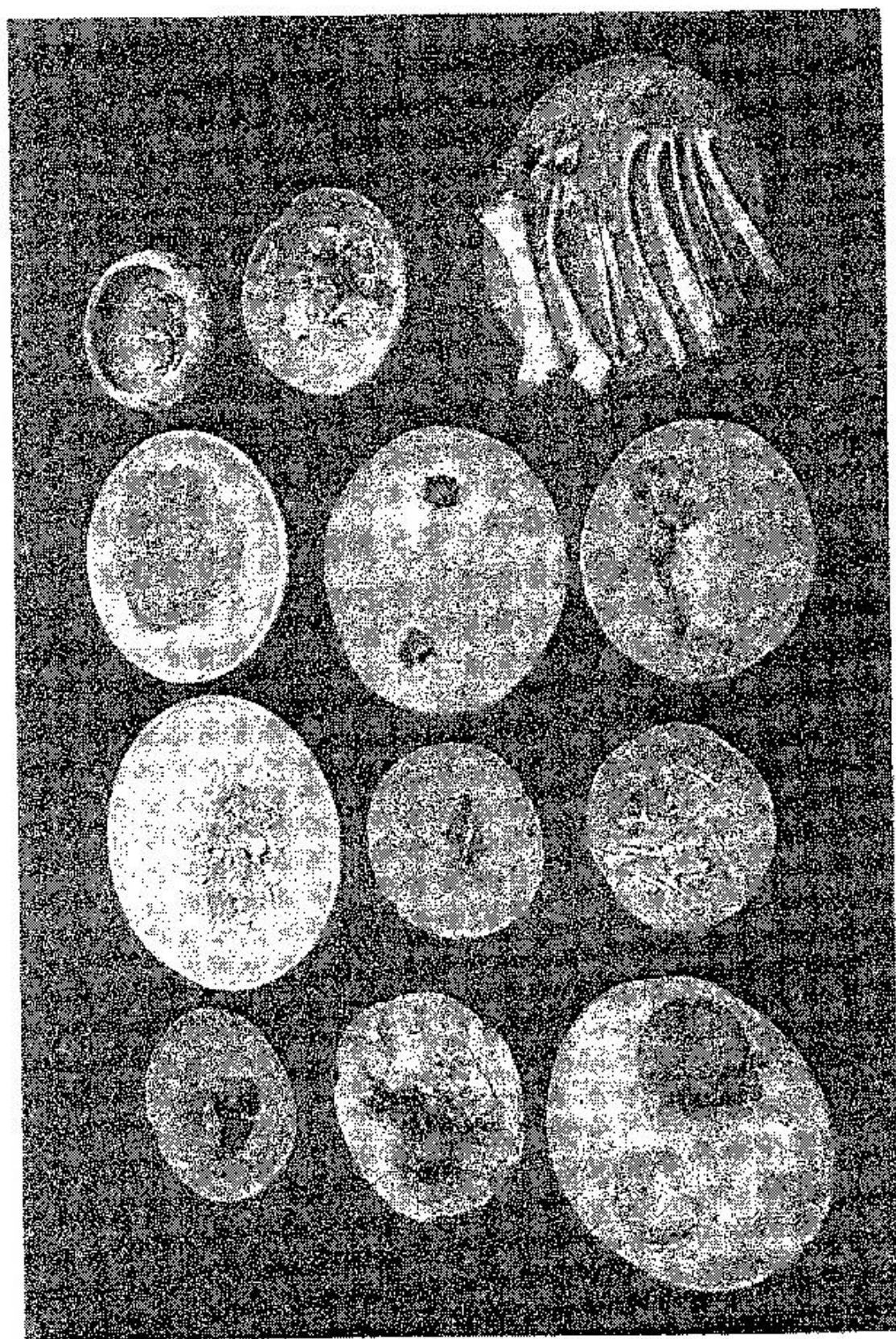


Burial of a dog at the entrance gate of the tomb of Queen Her-nit at Sakkara

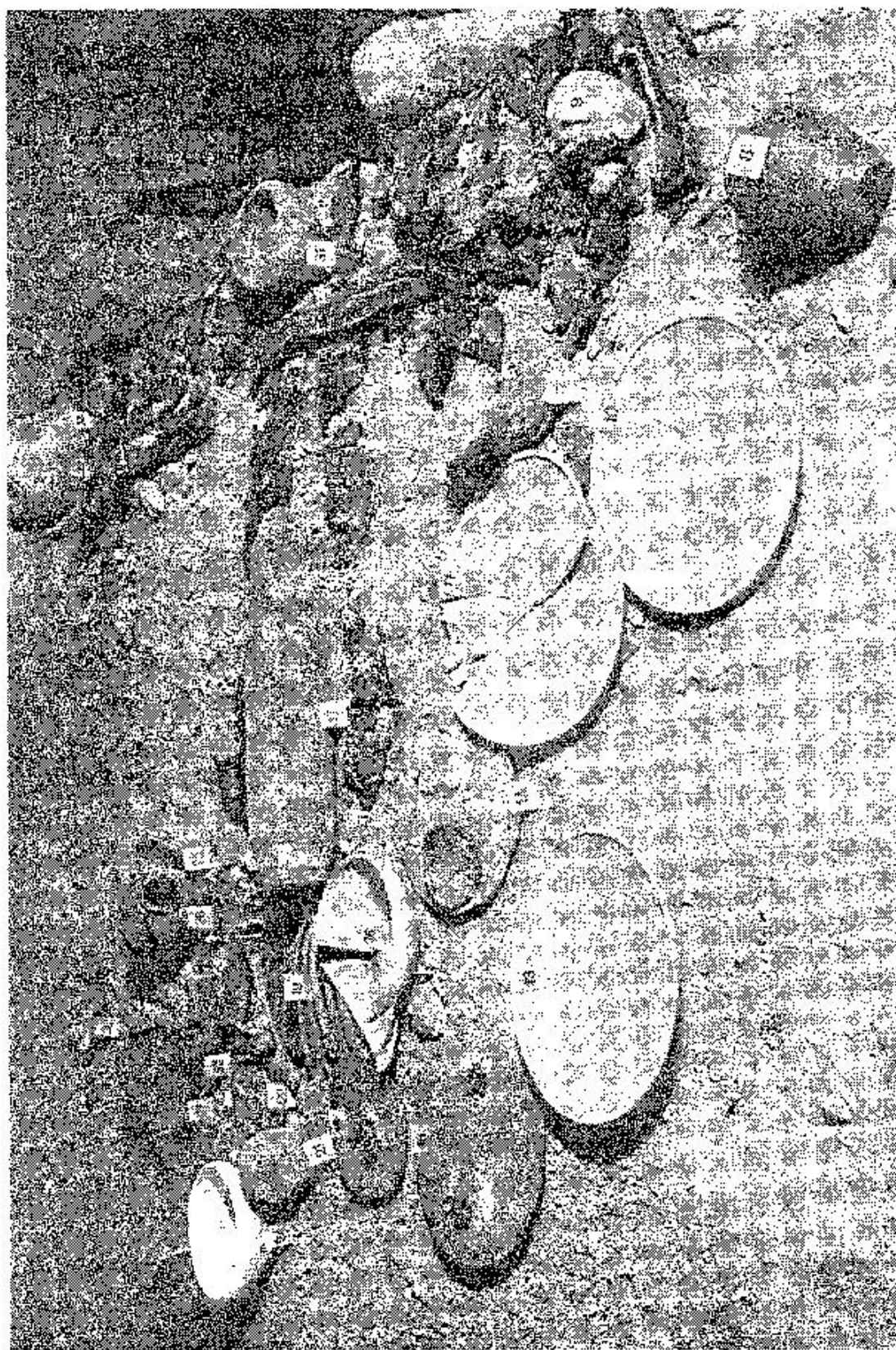


Remains of two wooden statues in the funerary temple of Ka'a at Sakkara



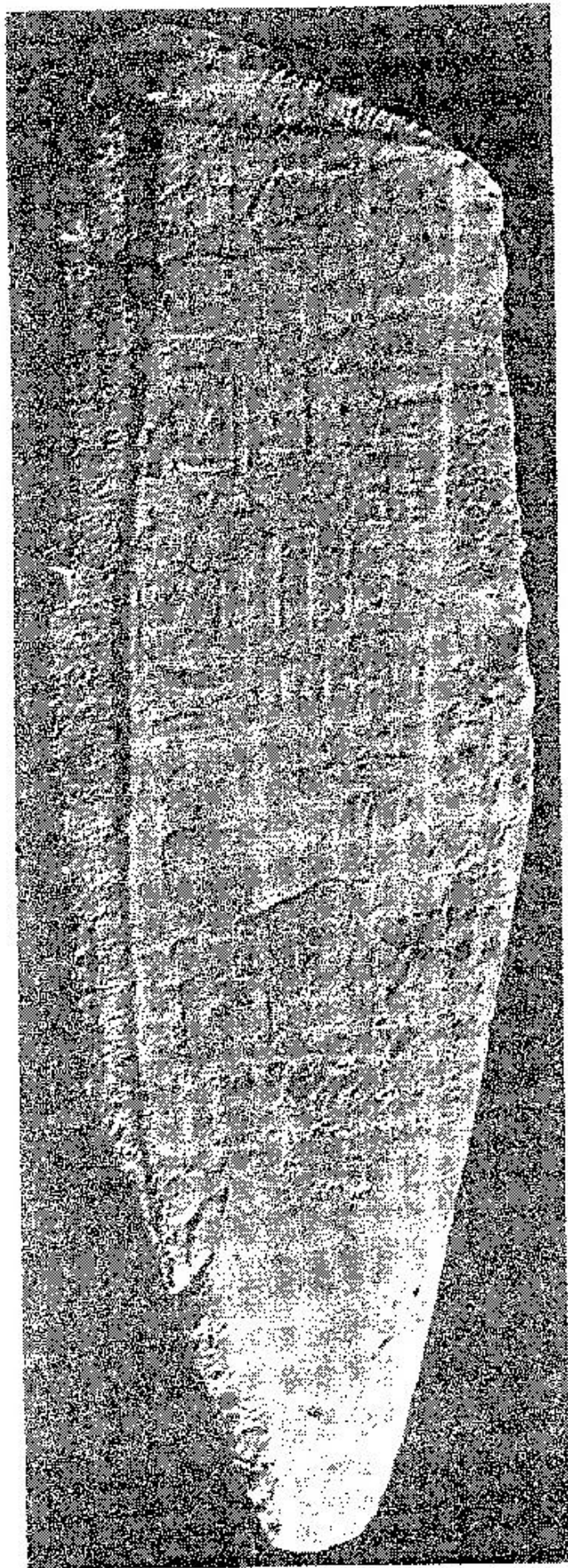


The funerary repast laid out on stone and pottery dishes

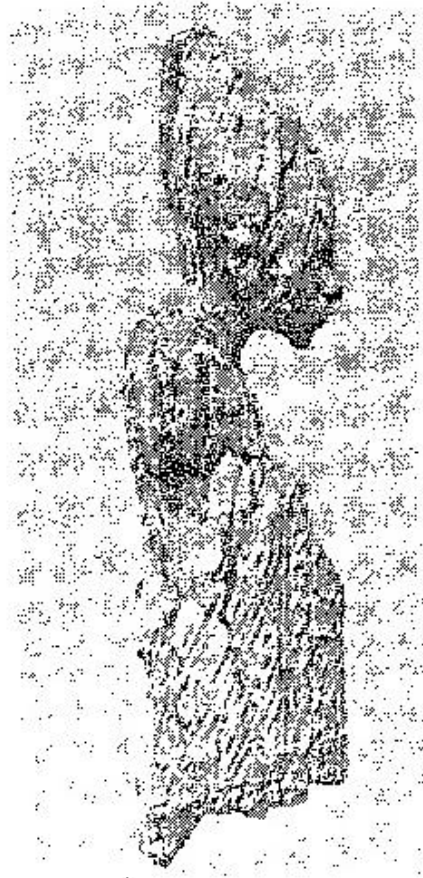


Funerary repast as found in an intact tomb of the Second Dynasty at Saklara

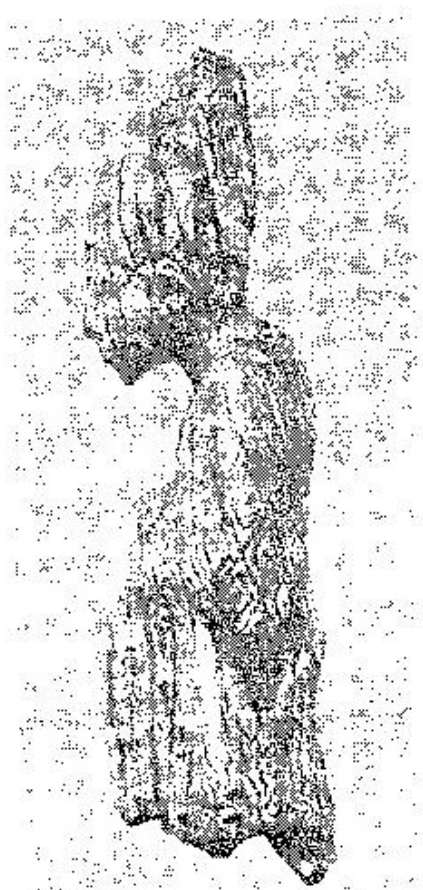




(a) The stela of the nobleman Merka  
from the tomb of Ka'a at Sakkara



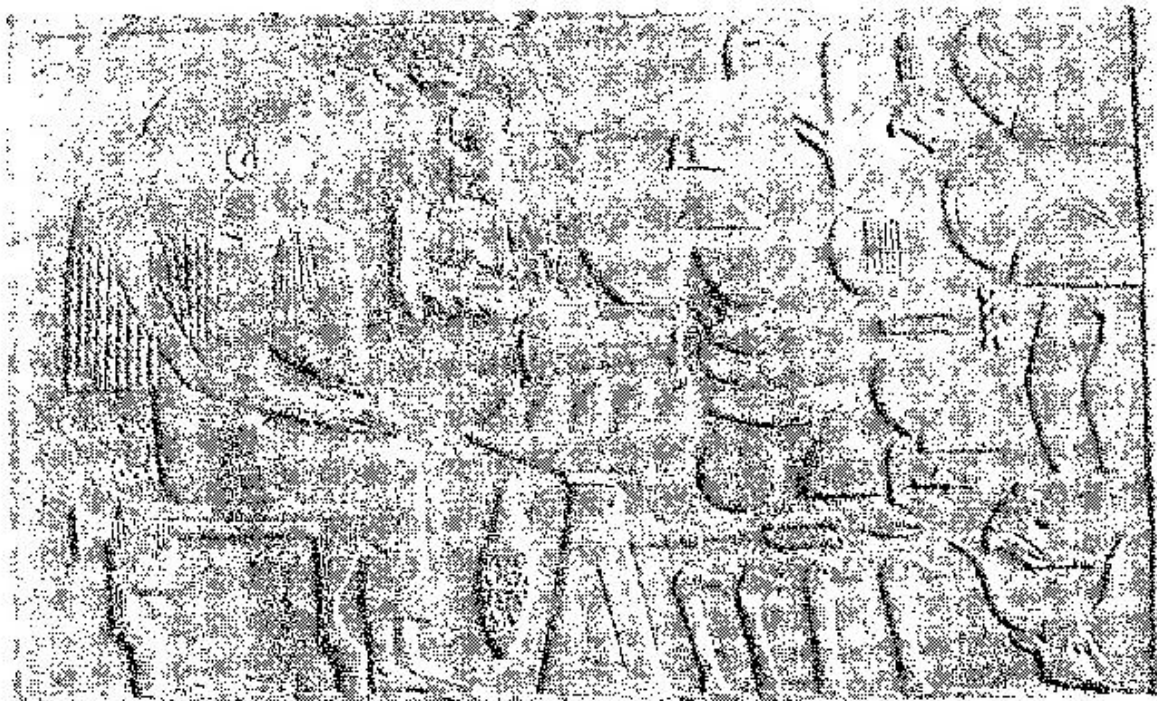
(b) Ivory statuette from  
Abydos



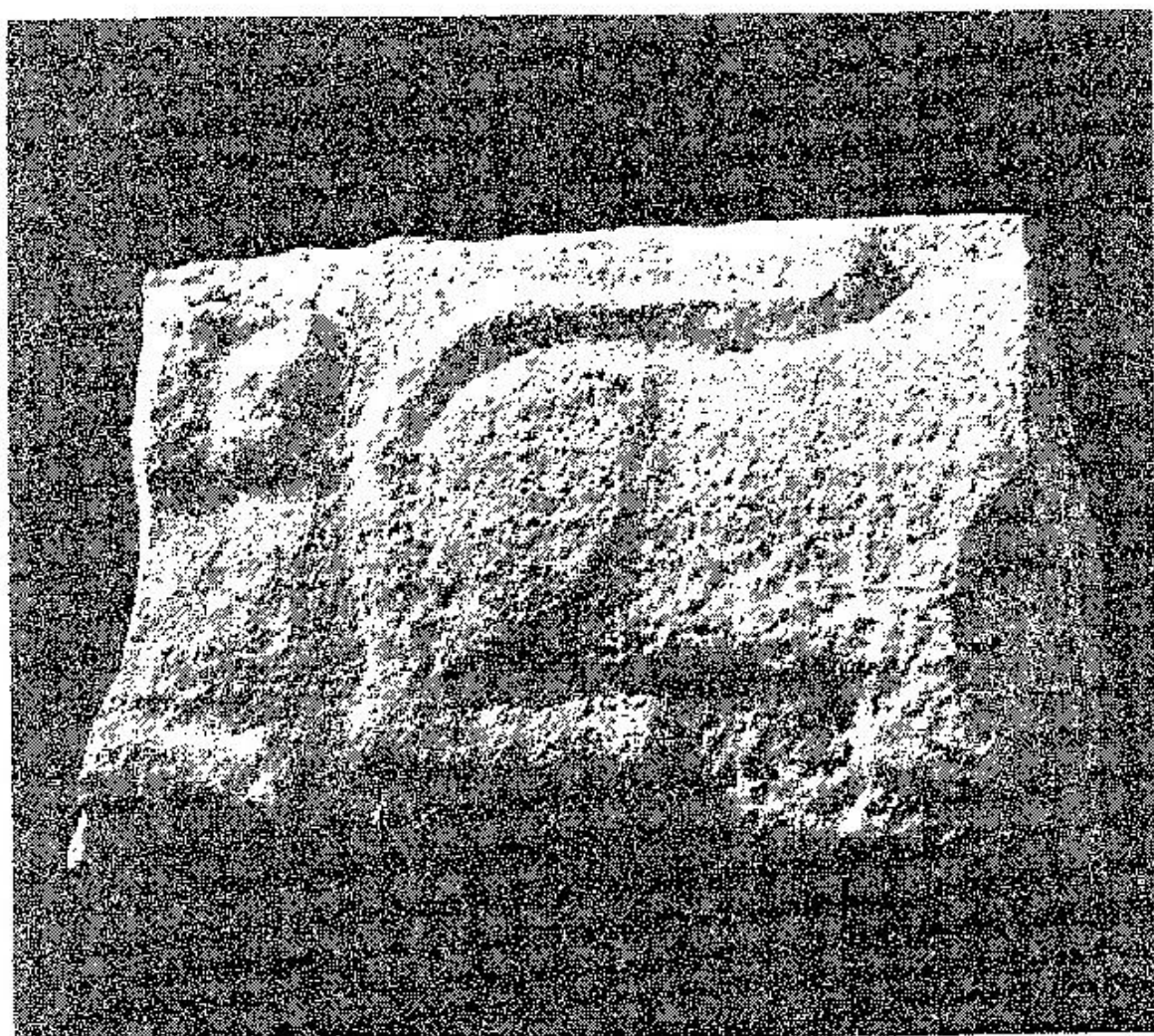


Schist statue of Kha-sekhem from Hierakonpolis

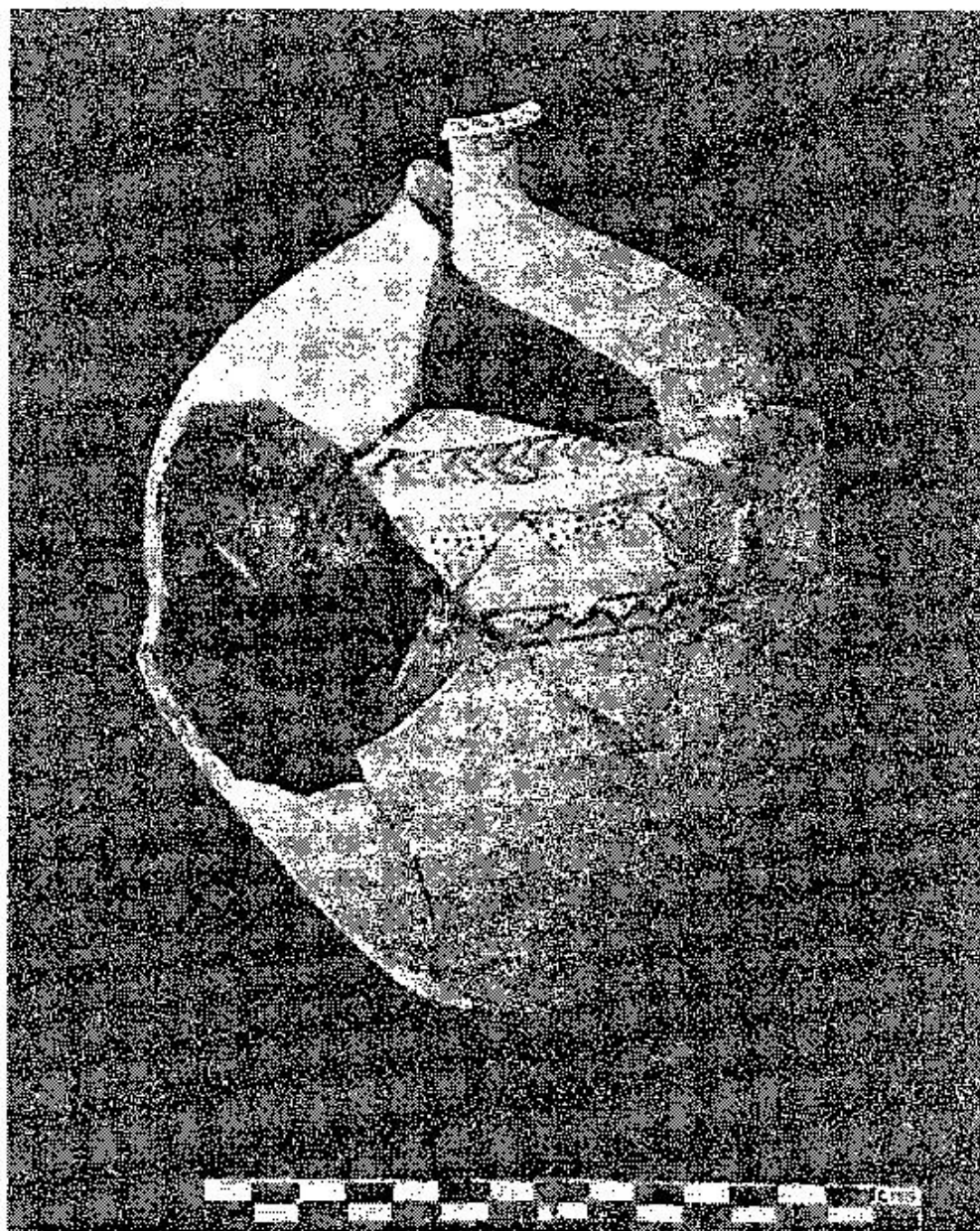




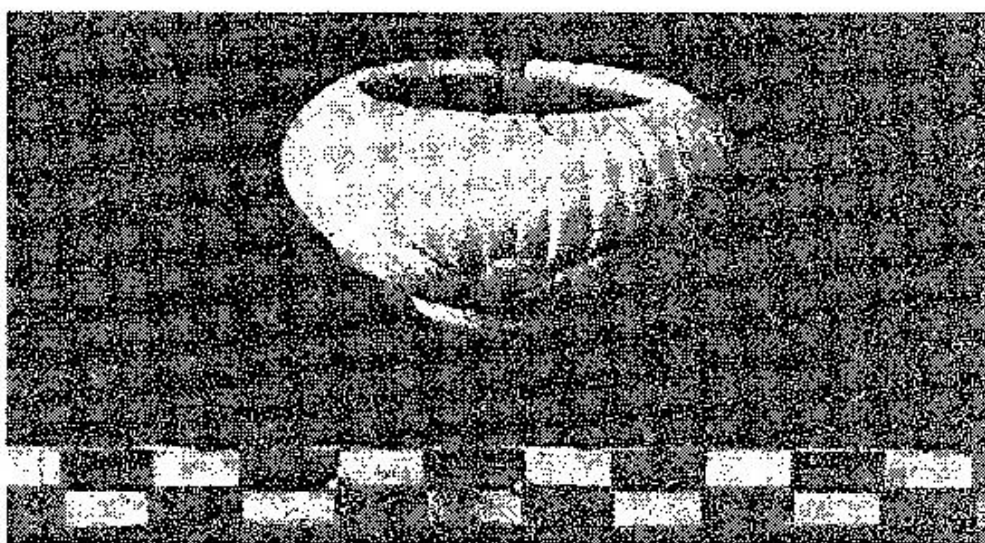
(a) Funerary stela of the Second Dynasty, from Sakkara



(b) Part of a limestone lintel carved with a frieze of lions. From the burial chamber of the tomb of Queen Her-nit at Sakkara

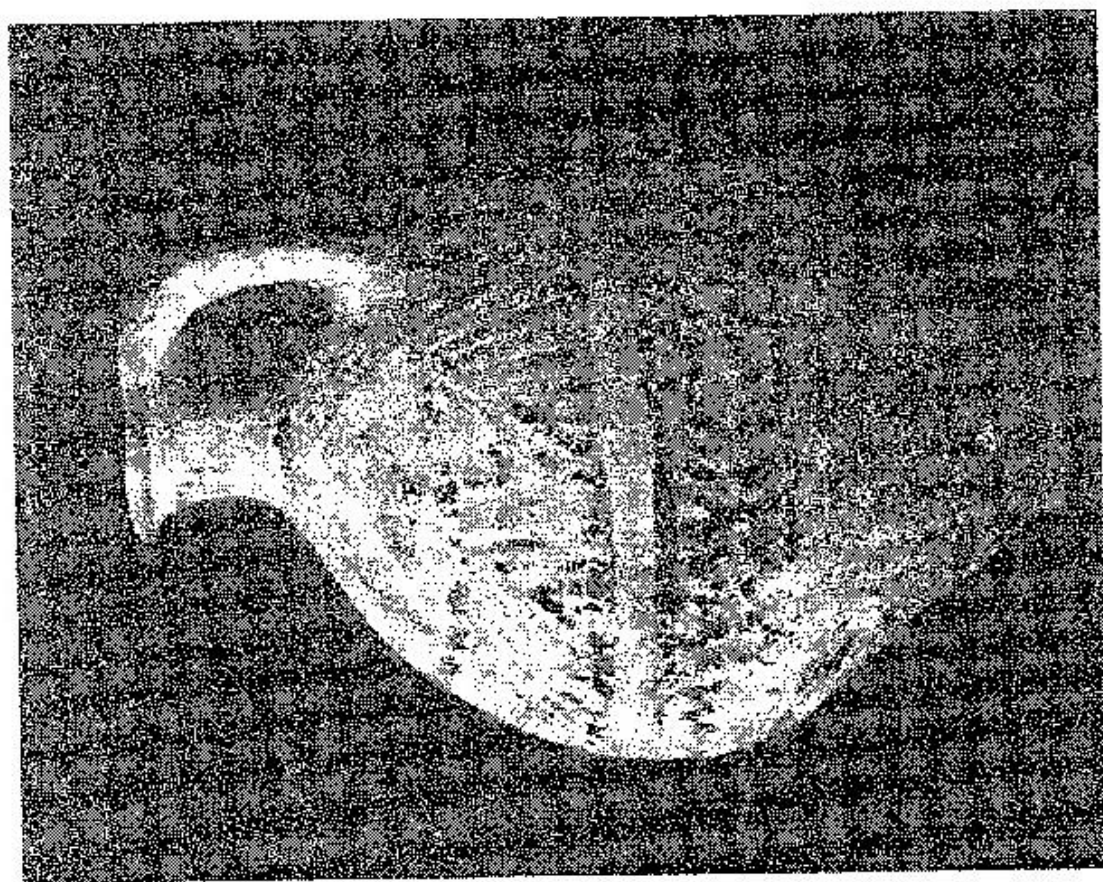


(a) Foreign pottery dated to the late First Dynasty

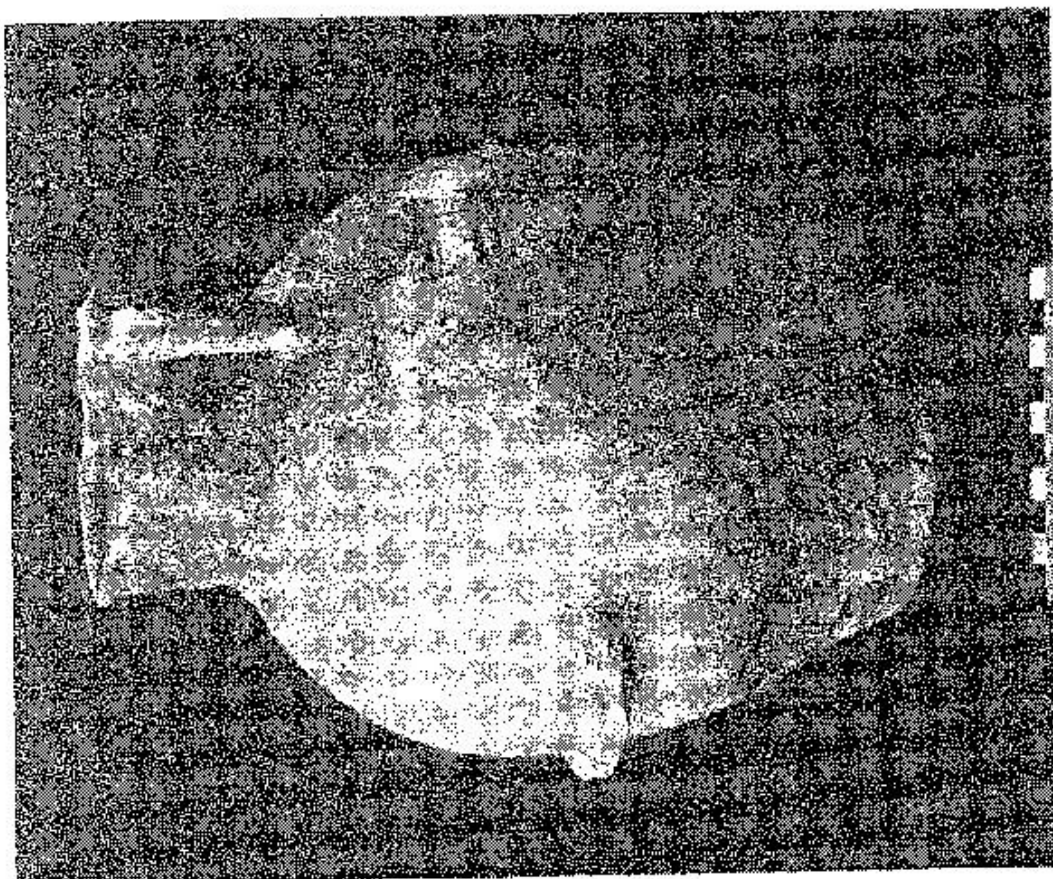


(b) Small alabaster bowl of floral design. Second Dynasty

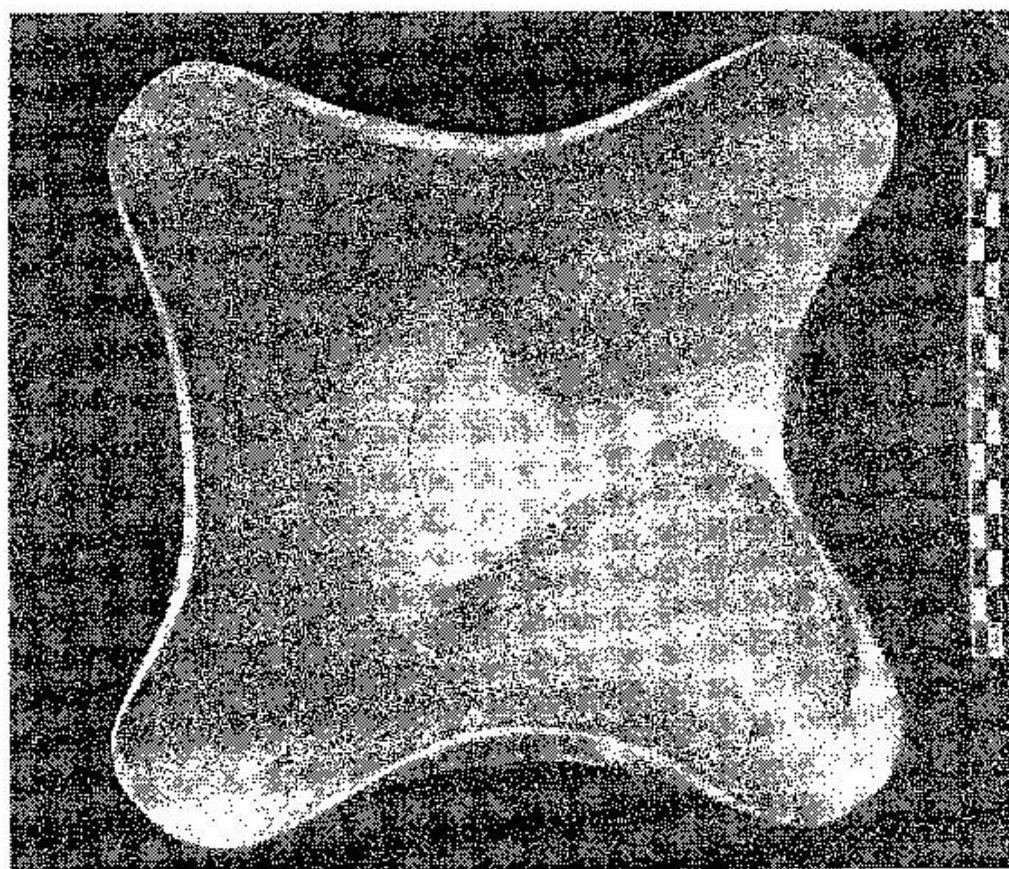




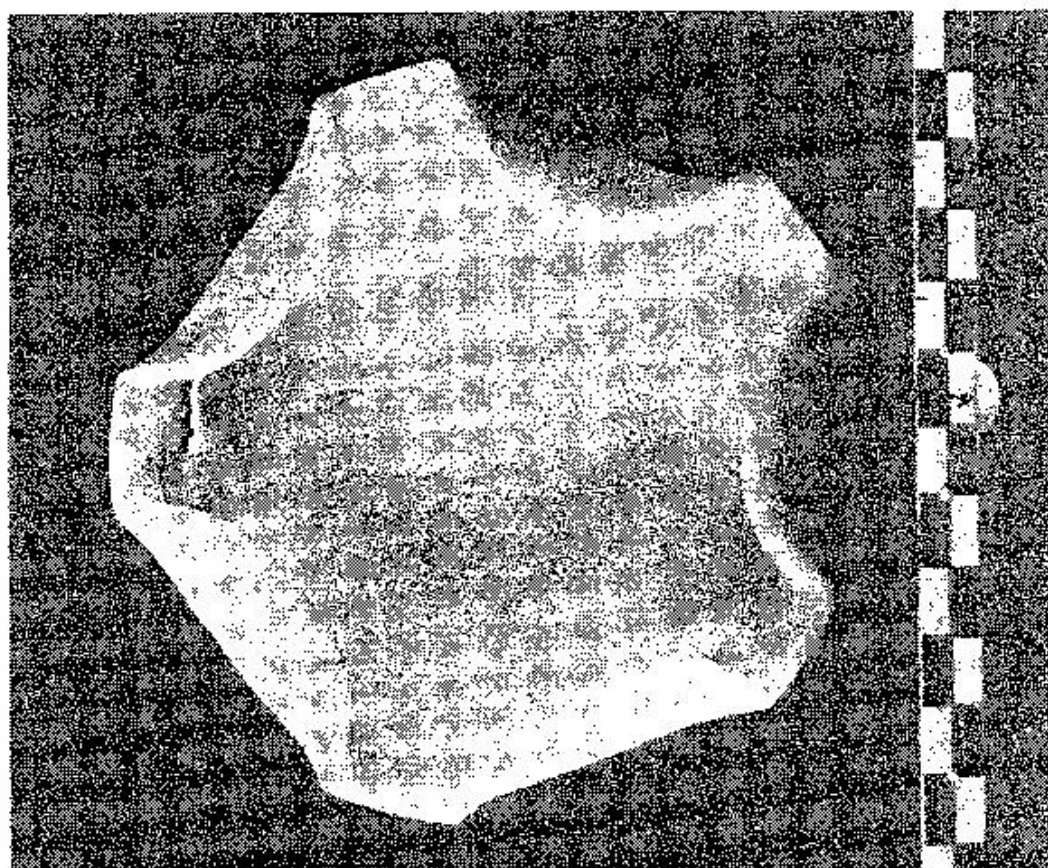
(a) Foreign pottery dated to the late First Dynasty



(b) Foreign pottery dated to the middle of the First Dynasty

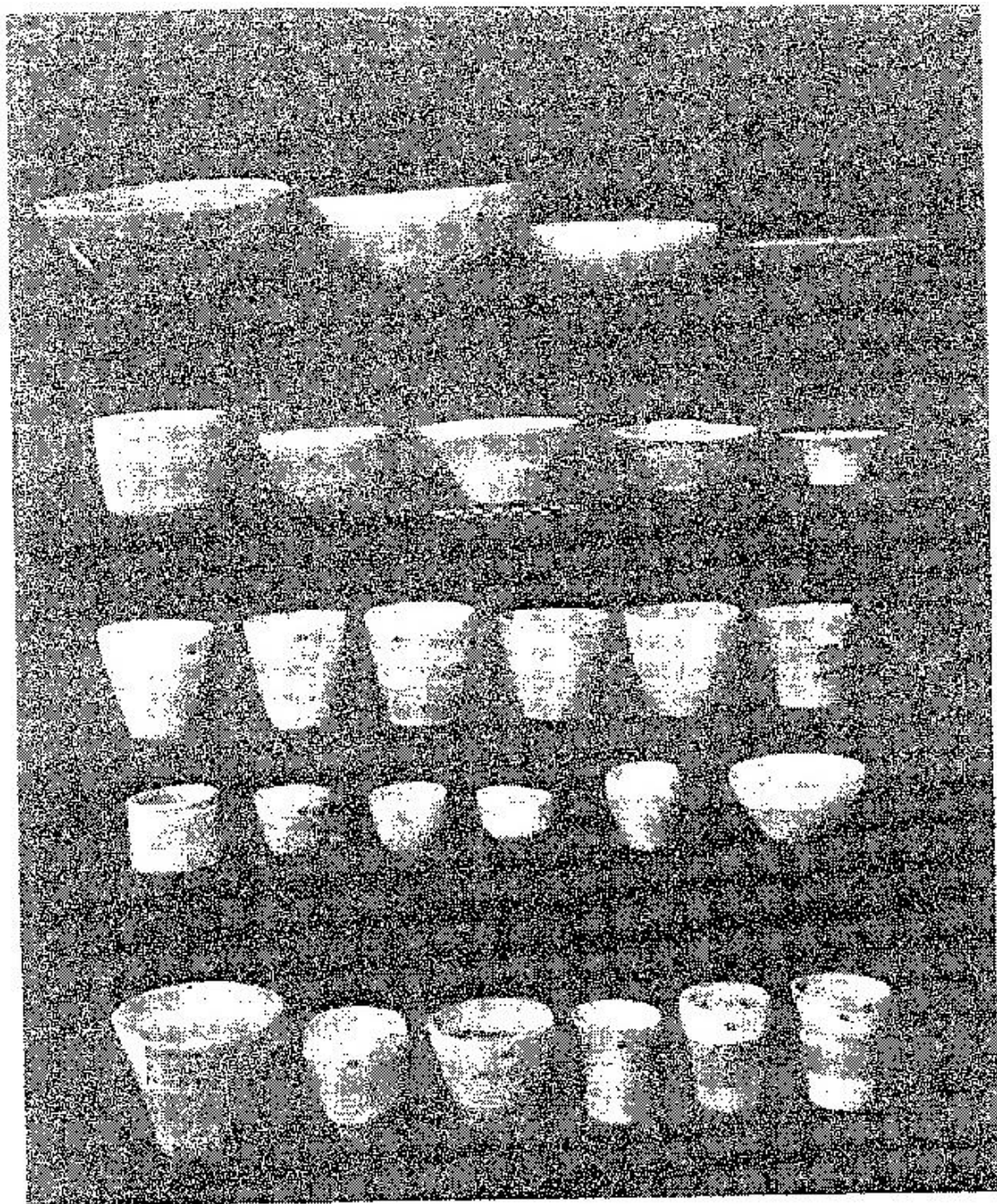


(a) Yellow limestone bowl of the First Dynasty from Sakkara

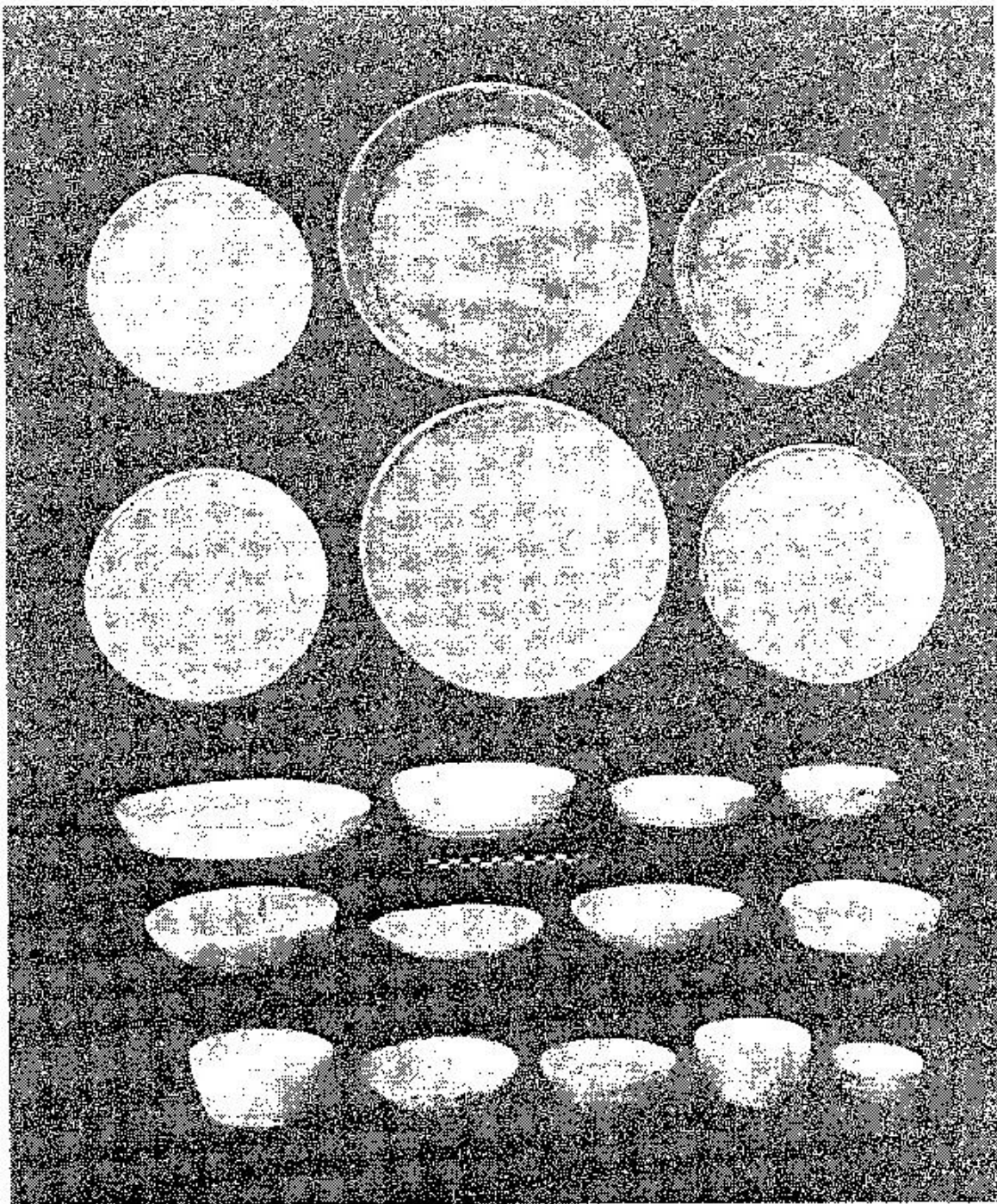


(b) Alabaster bowl of the Second Dynasty from Sakkara



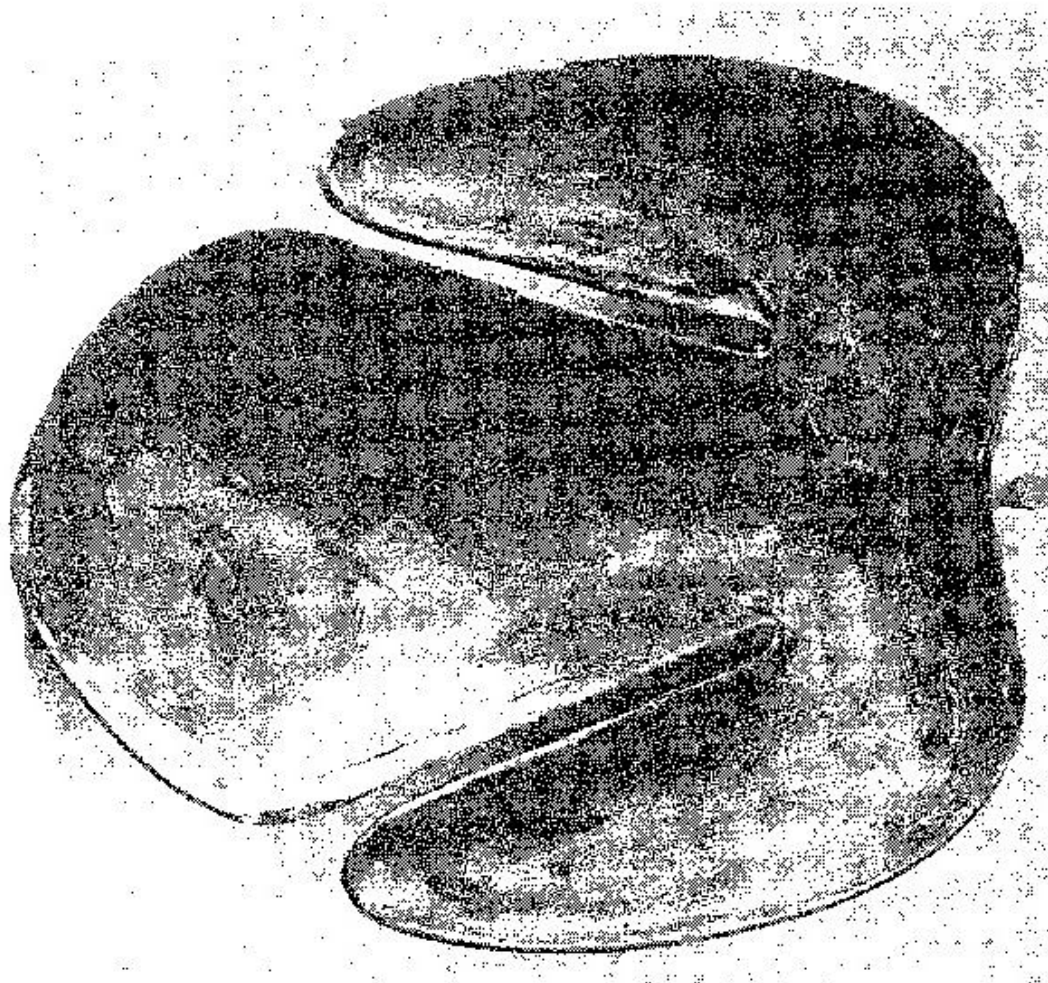


Alabaster vessels from the tomb of Hor-aha at Sakkara

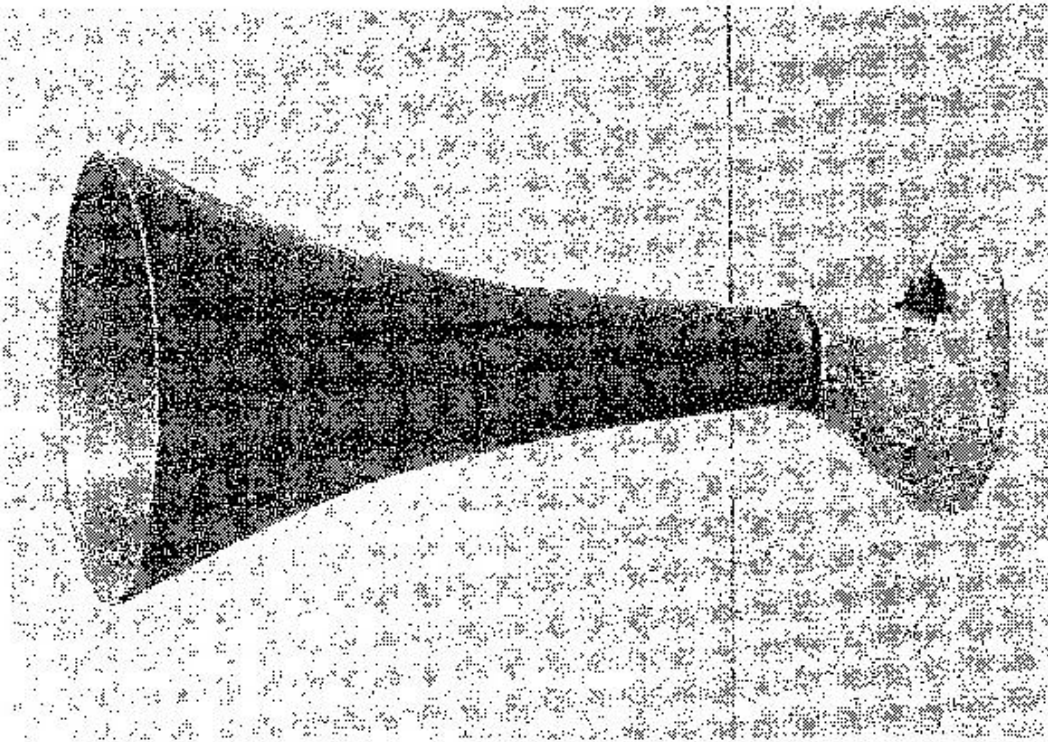


Alabaster vessels from the tomb of Hor-aha at Sakkara

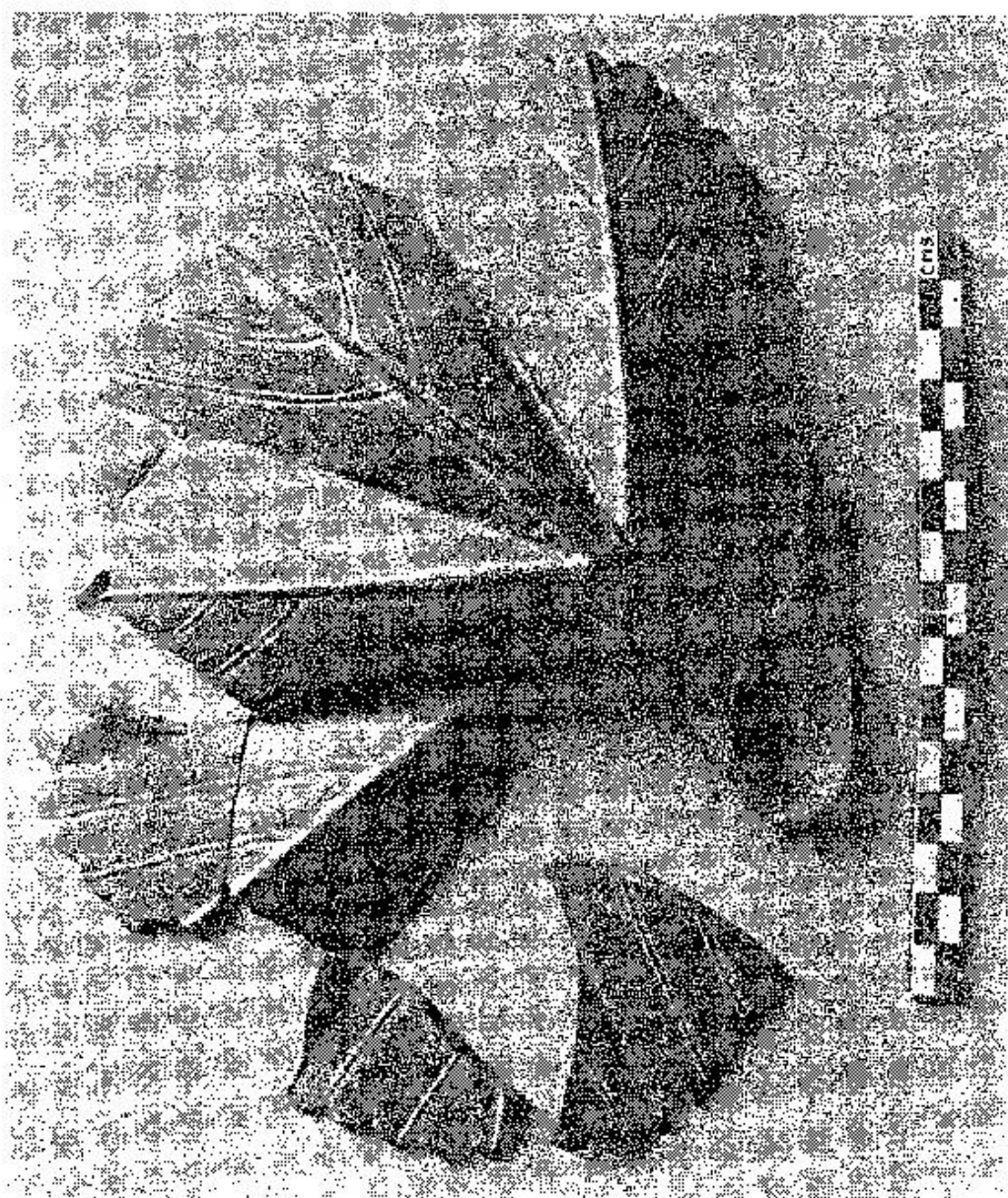




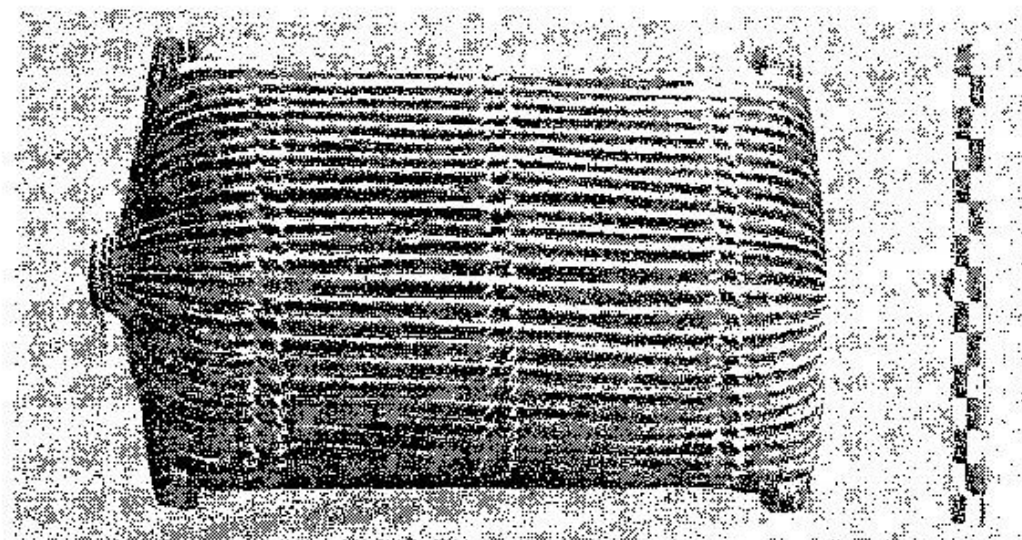
(a) Leaf-shaped dish of schist, Dated to the middle First  
Dynasty



(b) Cup of schist and pink limestone, from the  
tomb of Queen Hier-nit at Sakara

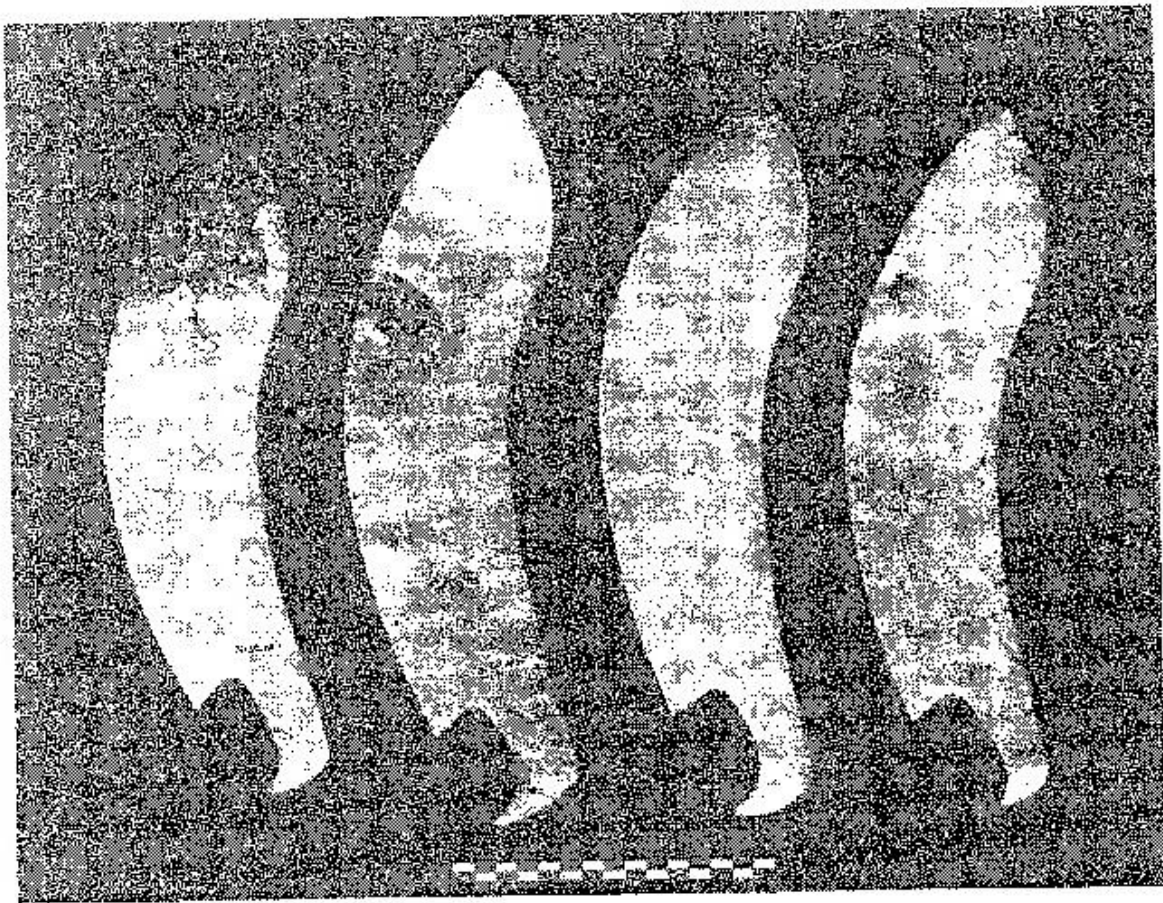


(a) Fragments of a leaf-shaped dish of schist and a spoon of schist. Dated to the middle of the First Dynasty

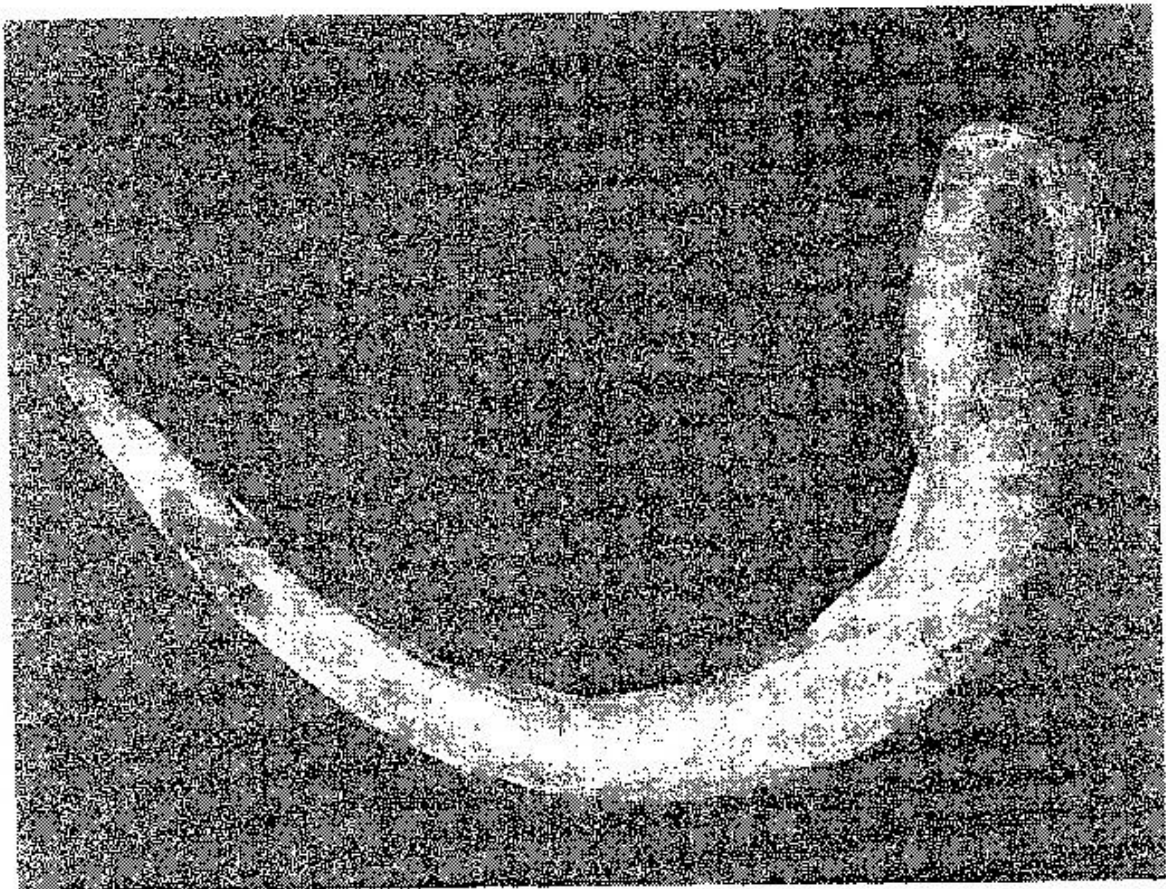


(b) Dish of schist in the form of a reed basket. Dated to the Second Dynasty





(a) Flint knives dated to the middle First Dynasty

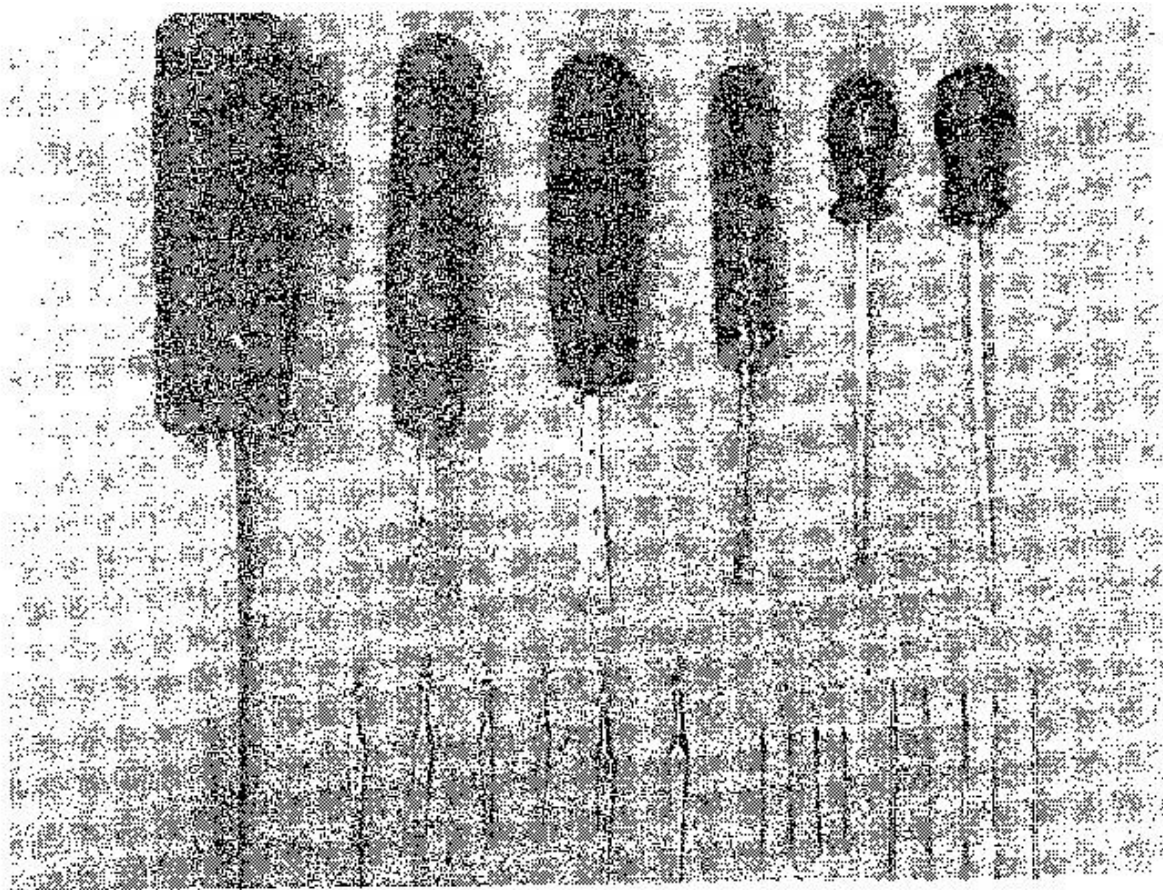


(b) Wooden sickle with inset flint cutting edge. Dated to the middle of the First Dynasty

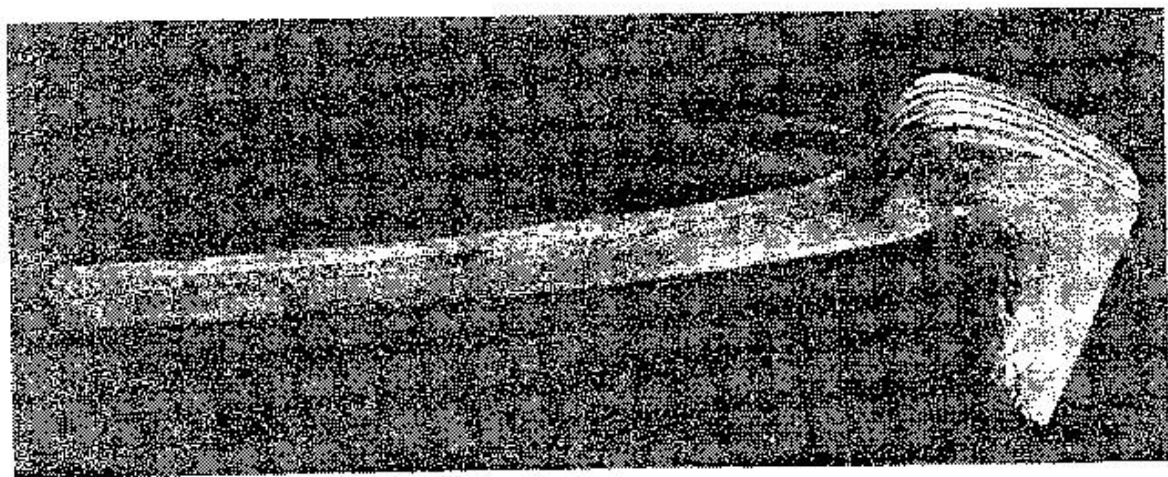


Copper tools, weapons, and vessels as found in the tomb of Zer at Sakkara

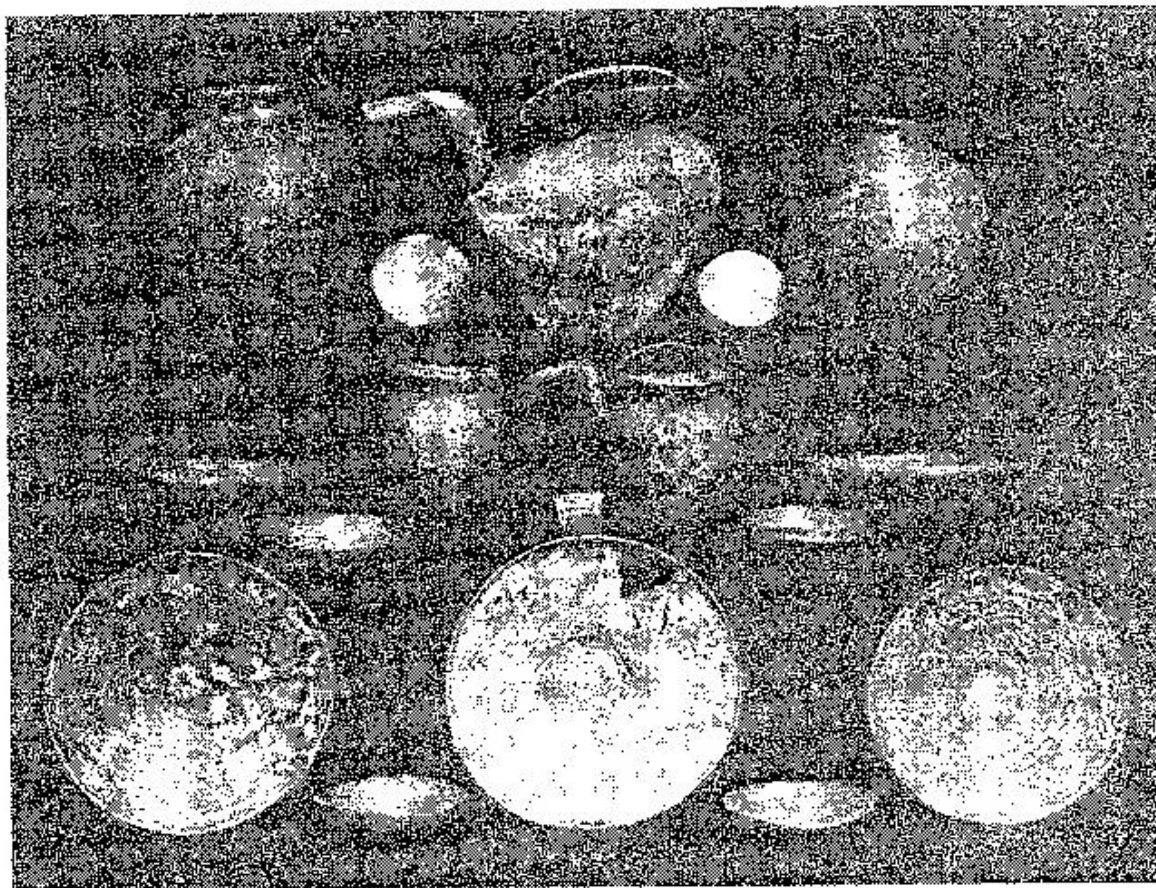




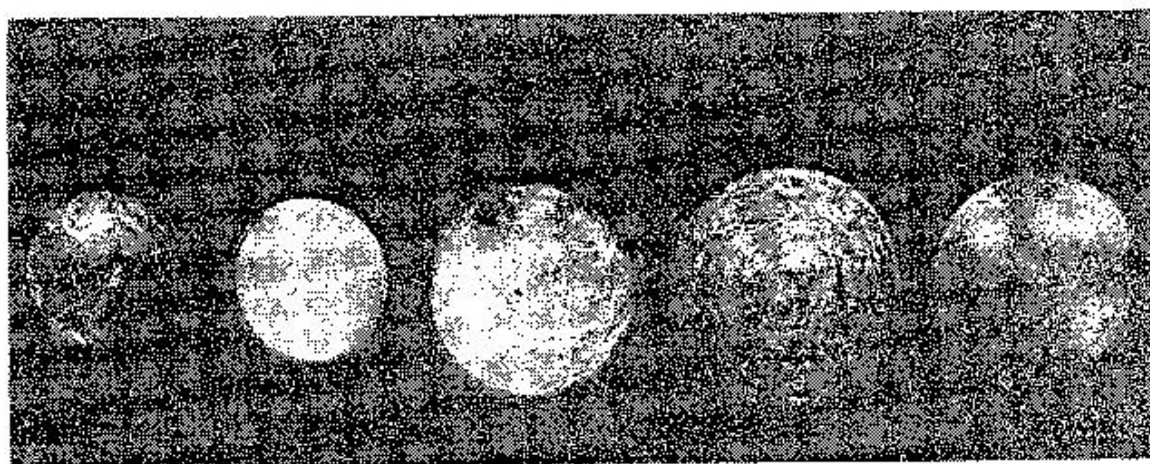
(a) Copper chisels, bodkins, and needles from the tomb of Zer at Sakkara



(b) Carved wooden hoe handle. Dated to the First Dynasty

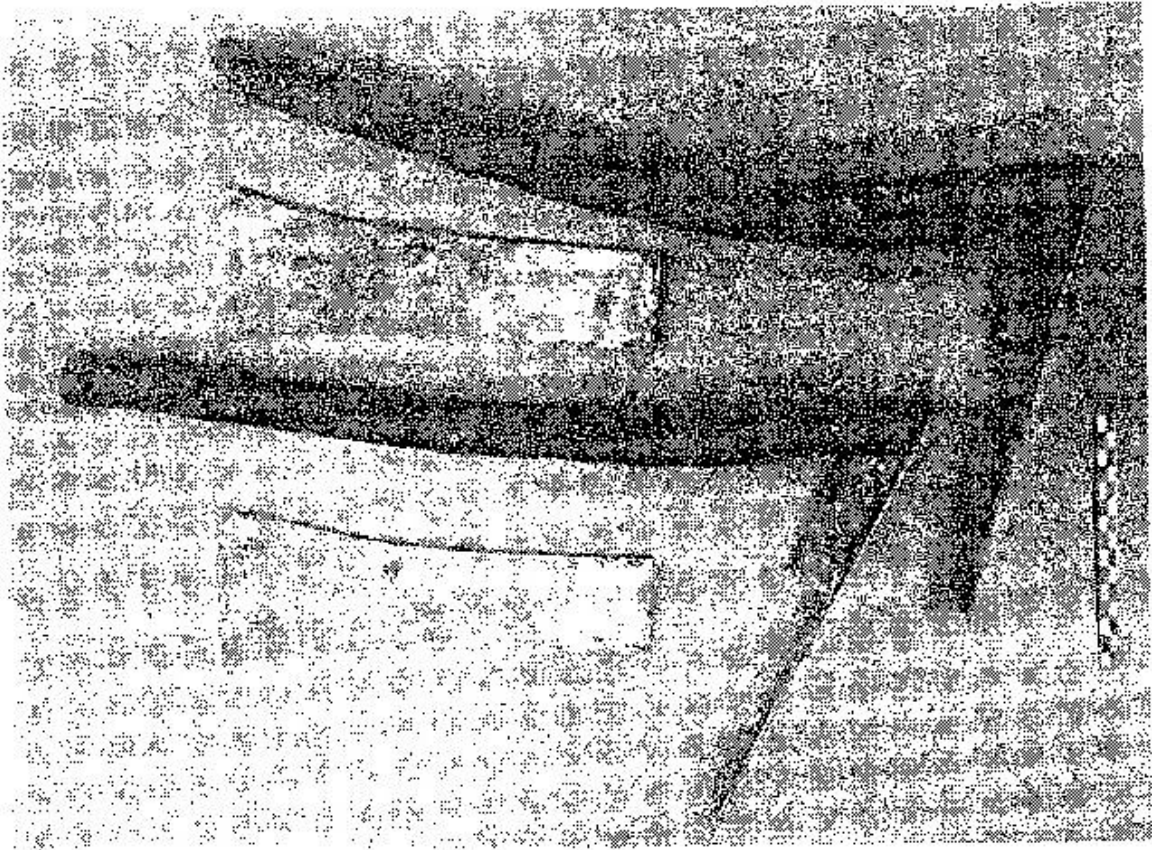


(a) Copper vessels from the tomb of Zer at Sakkara

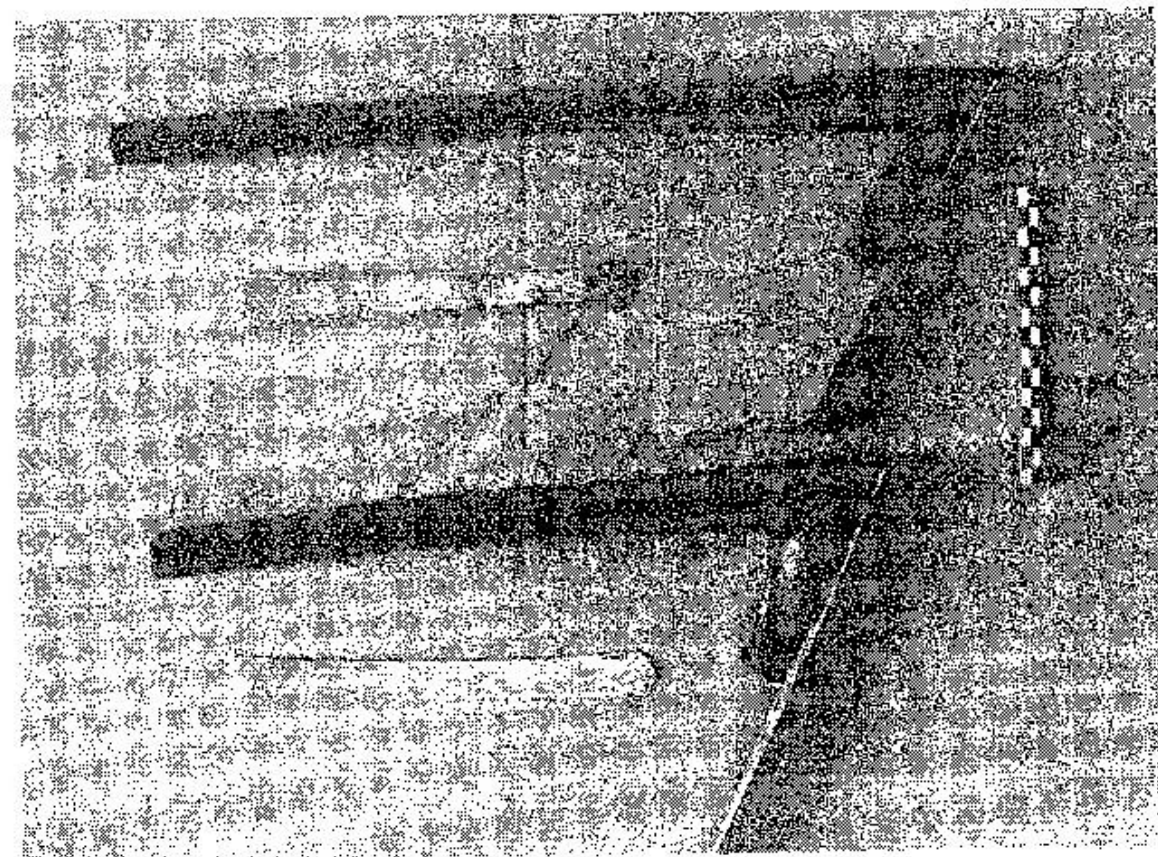


(b) Copper dishes from the tomb of Zer at Sakkara

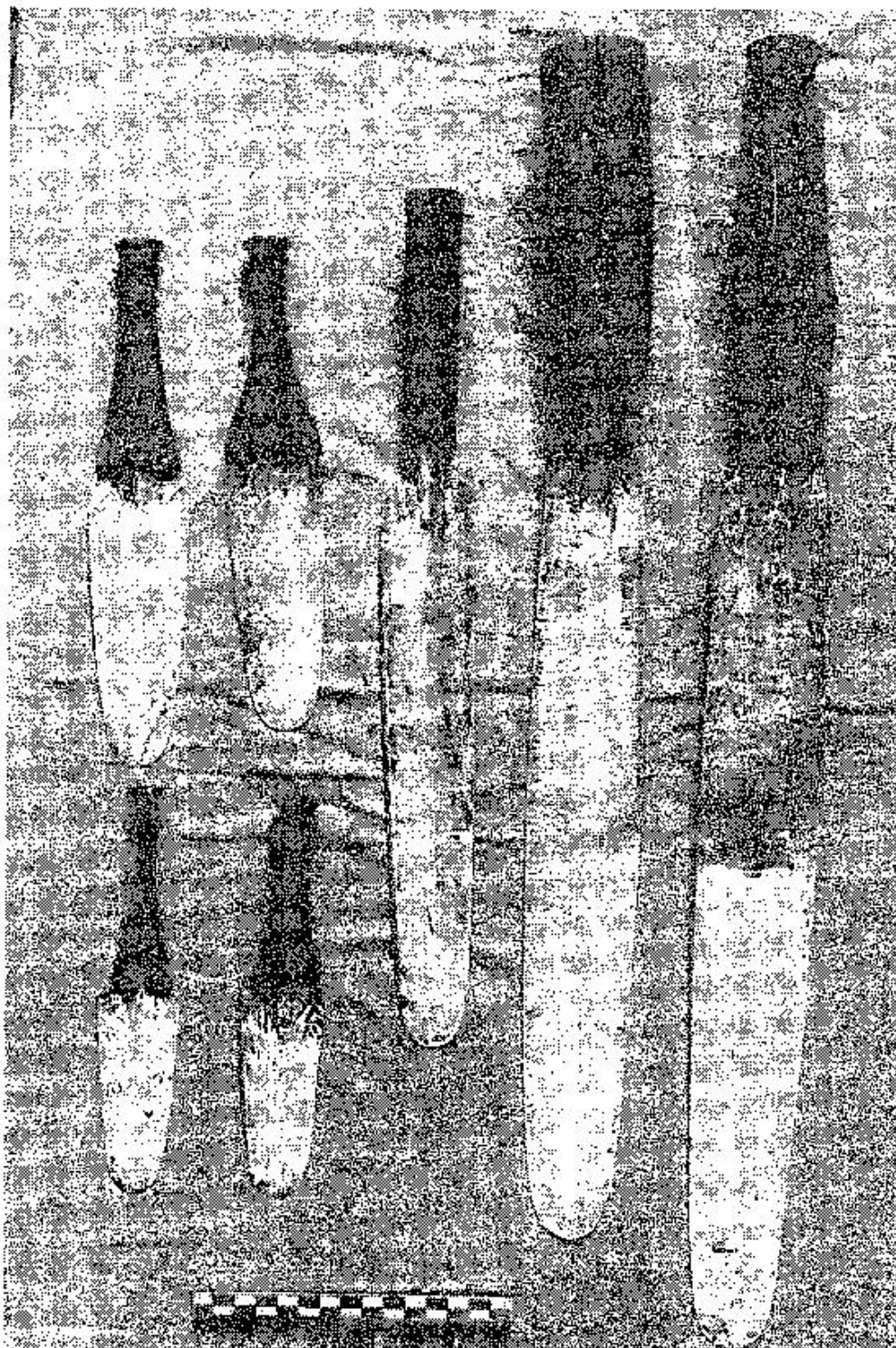




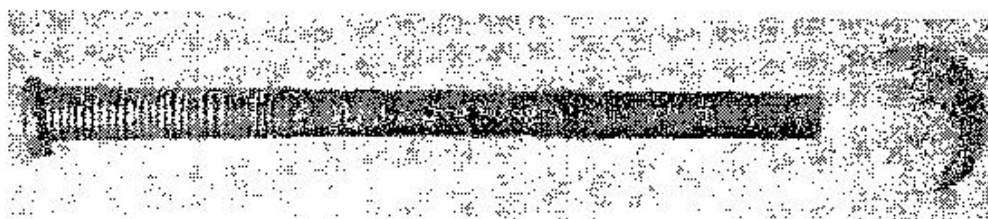
(a) Hoes with copper blades and wooden handles. Dated to the middle First Dynasty



(b) Adzes with copper blades and wooden handles. Dated to the middle of the First Dynasty

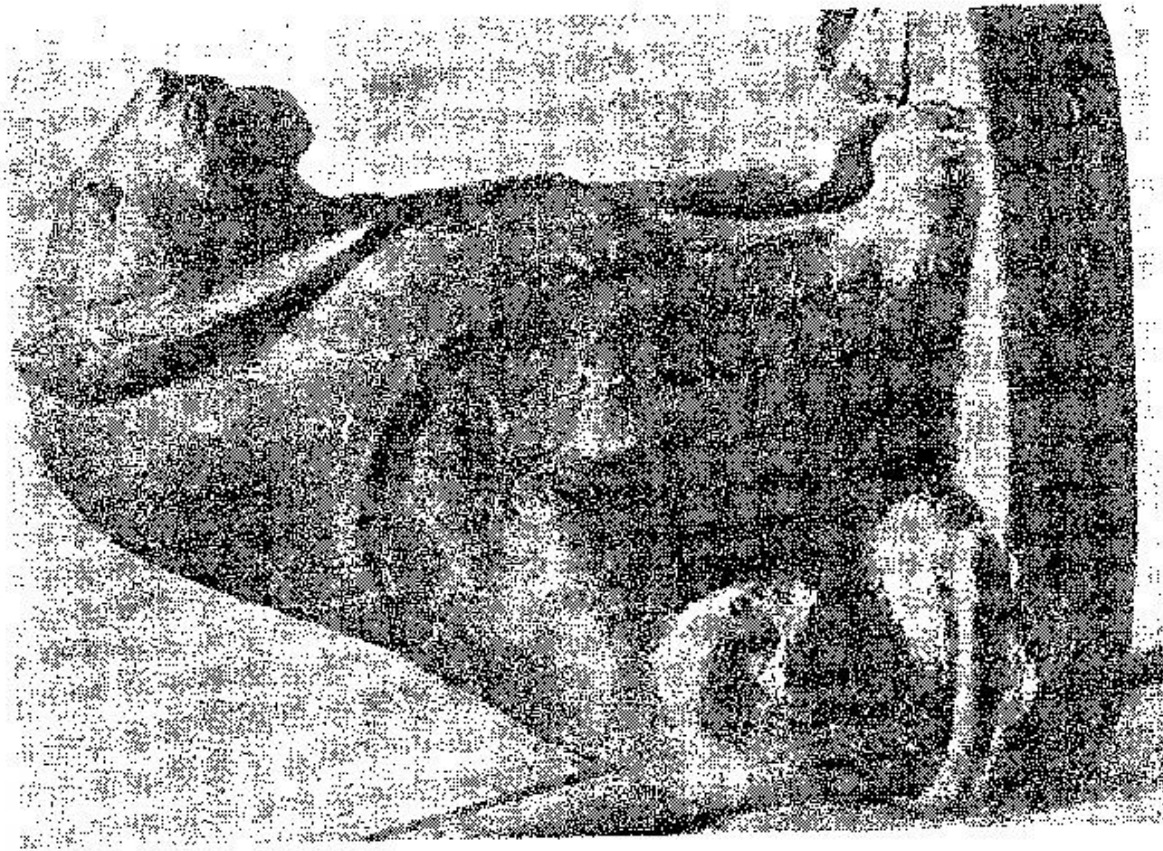


(a) Copper saw and knives. Dated to the middle of the First Dynasty

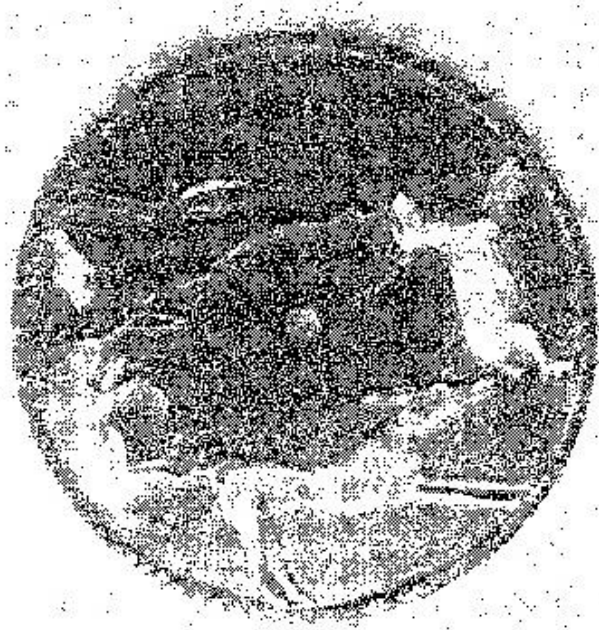


(b) Gold plated mace handle from Nubia. Dated to the First Dynasty

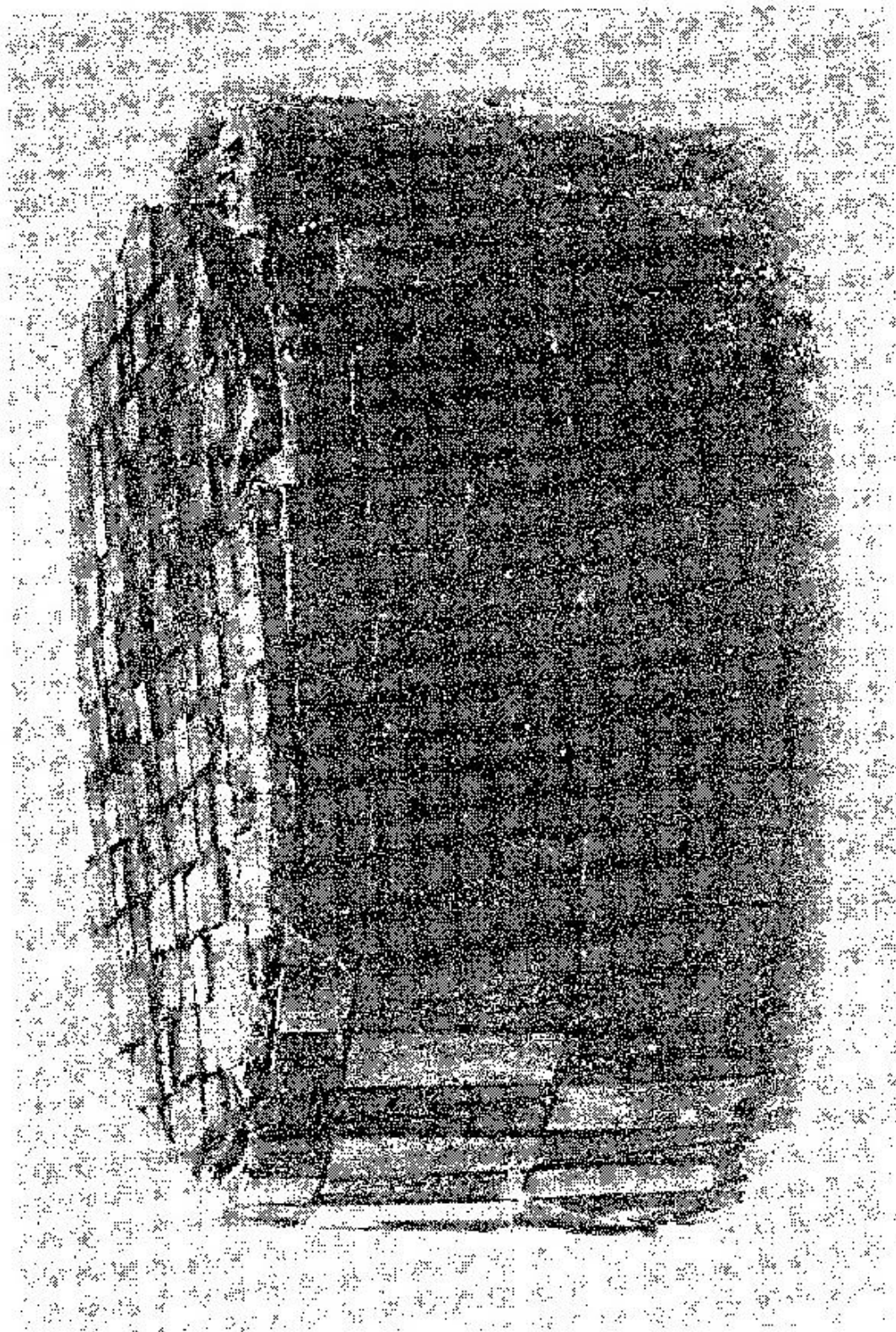




(a) Pottery lion of the Second Dynasty.  
From Hieraconpolis

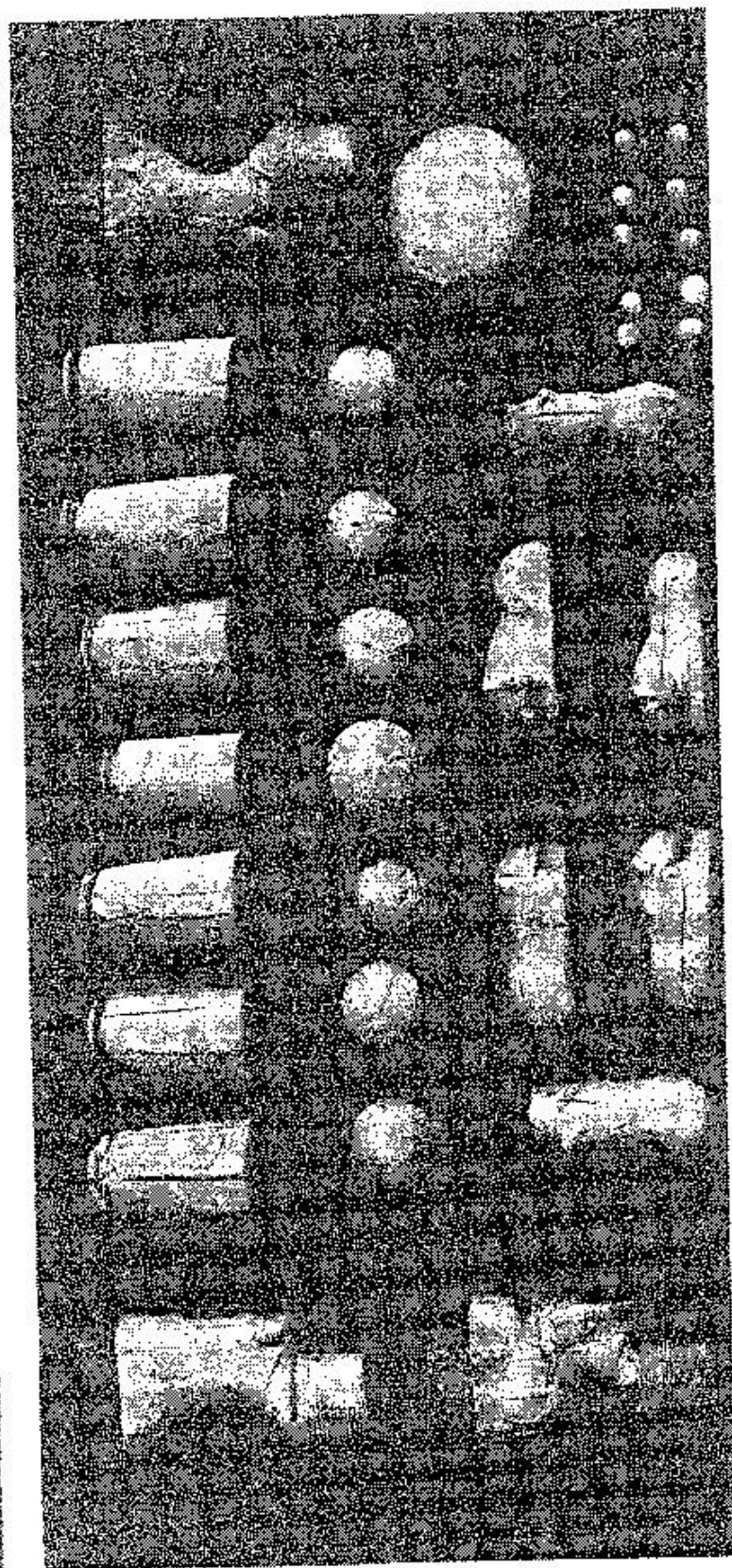
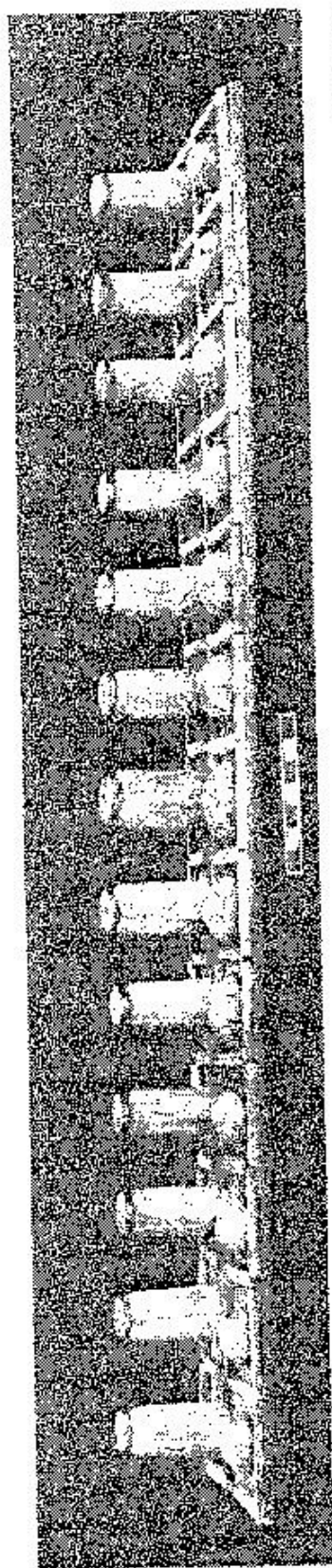


(b) Gaming disc of black steatite inlaid  
with alabaster. Dated to the First  
Dynasty. From Sakkara



Circular wooden box inlaid with ebony. Dated to the First Dynasty. When found, it contained a roll of uninscribed papyrus. From Sakkarā





Ivory gaming sets from the tomb of Uadji at Sakkara

and weapons. In fact all the objects which made life comfortable were to supply the same service in the after life, as were the servants of the kings who accompanied their master in death. The tomb was designed as his house and, like a house, frequently had gardens attached to it; in some tombs of the Second Dynasty we even find lavatories constructed near the burial chamber, within the substructure of the tomb. In fact, unlike the Christian, the Egyptian believed that 'you could take it with you'; hence the elaborate funerary installation which must have represented a large proportion of his material wealth accumulated during life.

In the following review of typical burials of various classes of society throughout the 450 years of Egypt's Archaic Period, we can observe the developments of the architectural genius of these people; change followed change, reflecting the increasing prosperity which Unification had brought to the land. But not all these changes were for the better; they were dictated by the increasing awareness of the designers of funerary architecture of the dangers of tomb robbery. In order to protect the valuable equipment of the dead, the burial chambers were cut deeper and protected with stone portcullis blockings. Other changes were probably caused by the development of new religious conceptions, but of this we have only the vaguest knowledge until the excavator can give us more material for research. However, in spite of all the changes and development, the fundamental design of the tombs of the archaic Egyptian remained the same throughout the period: a substructure built below ground level, covered by a brick superstructure in the form of an oblong rectangular platform built in imitation of the dwelling house or palace of the period. Archaeologists speak of these superstructures as 'mastabas', adopting the name given to them by Egyptian workmen who saw in a general form their resemblance to the stone or brick-built bench called a *mastaba*.

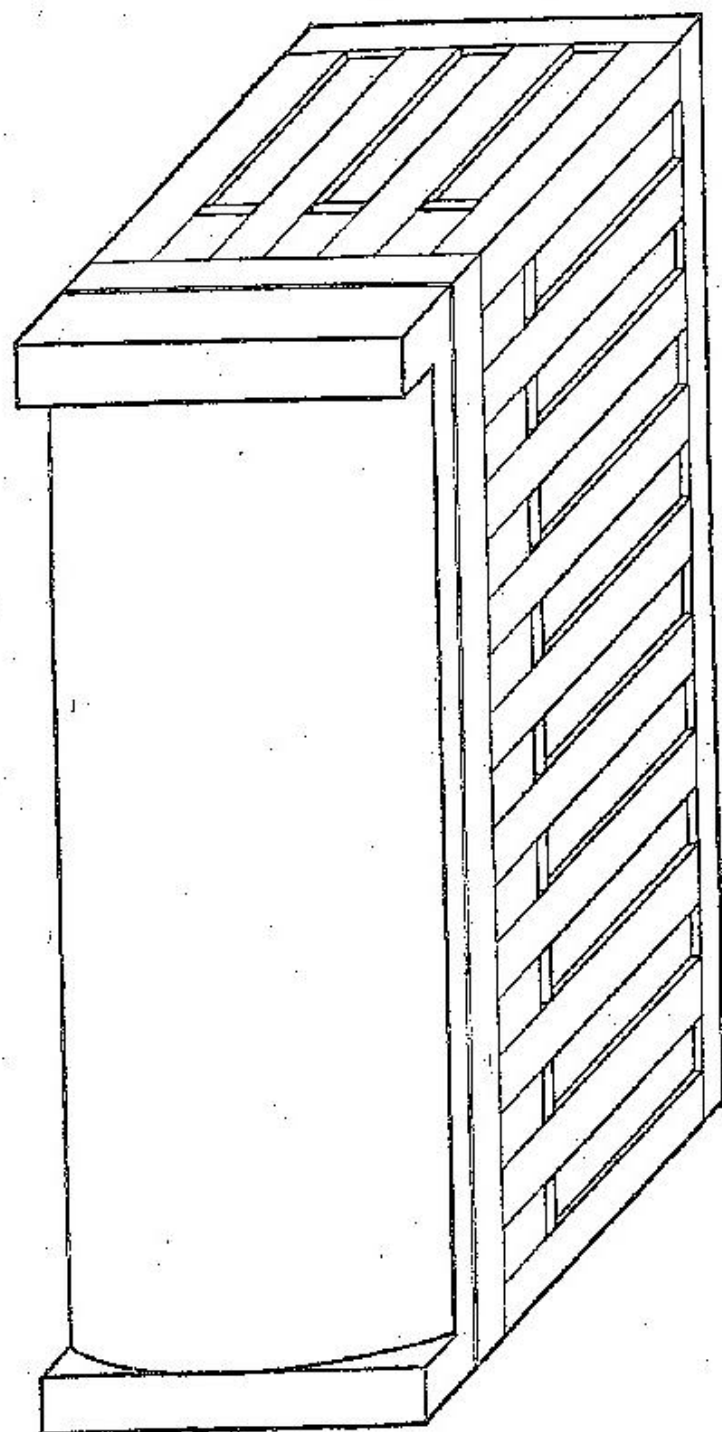


in Arabic which is a common feature of the exterior of their homes.

The evolution in architectural design of the tombs may be roughly divided into six developments, which for the sake of convenience we term early, middle, and late of the First Dynasty, and early, middle, and late of the Second Dynasty. It will be understood that these phases of development have no hard and fast lines of demarcation and the designs of the tombs and funerary customs overlapped from one period to another, depending largely on the locality of the burial and the inclinations and social status of the individual. But in general, in the Memphite area, we can trace certain well-defined changes. In the south at Abydos, the superstructures of the royal tombs or cenotaphs were certainly entirely different in design from their counterparts in the north. No trace of them remains, but, from evidence found at Sakkara, it would appear probable that in the early part of the First Dynasty the superstructure consisted of a rectangular tumulus of rubble cased with brick, which later developed into a stepped pyramid structure similar to that found above the tomb of Enezib at Sakkara. However, the substructures of the Abydos monuments in general conform to the same line of evolution as at Sakkara. Again, for the convenience of this review, we may divide the burial installations of each of the six periods into four classes: 1. that of the kings and higher nobility; 2. the lesser nobility and aristocracy; 3. the minor officials and artisans; and 4. the peasantry. In the early First Dynasty, the tombs of the kings and great nobles consisted of a shallow pit, cut not more than four metres below ground level, in which a series of brick-built rooms was erected, the central and largest being reserved for the burial and the rest to accommodate all the more precious objects of the funerary equipment. This substructure was roofed with timber beams and planks and the mouth of the pit above it filled with

rubble. Above this substructure, on ground level, was erected the 'mastaba', a rectangular mass of brickwork with an elaborate panelled exterior and its hollow interior divided up into a series of magazines in which was placed the less valuable funerary equipment. These magazines were roofed with heavy timber; the outer walls of the mastabas were raised aloft to a much greater height than the interior walls, leaving a great intervening space which was filled with rubble forming a core of the mass of the superstructure up to a height of not less than 7 metres. The whole of the panelled exterior of the mastaba was painted in gay colours in designs which imitated the matwork which adorned the outside of the dwelling places of the living; for of course the tomb was a copy of the house or palace of the owner in life (Fig. 79). It is very likely that the top of the mastaba was curved with a flat parapet at each end, as shown in the coffins of the late Second Dynasty (Fig. 77). So much for the actual structure of the tomb, which was usually surrounded by an enclosure wall beyond which were sometimes rows of graves of the owner's servants buried with him for his service in the after life. On the north side of the building was a long brick structure which must have looked rather like the hull of an old-fashioned submarine. This structure contained a wooden boat which was to take the spirit of the dead owner on his voyage with the sun-god (Fig. 78).

We have as yet no satisfactory evidence regarding the actual method of interment, for there was no recognized method of entry to the burial chamber. It is possible that the superstructure was not raised until the burial chamber was occupied and the adjoining rooms filled with their contents. In some burials at Sakkara, there are indications that a corridor in the superstructure leading to the centre of its interior was kept open for the passage of the actual burial; but even then the body of the deceased would have to be lowered



SCALE 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 METRE

Fig. 77. Wooden coffin of the late Second Dynasty from Sakkara



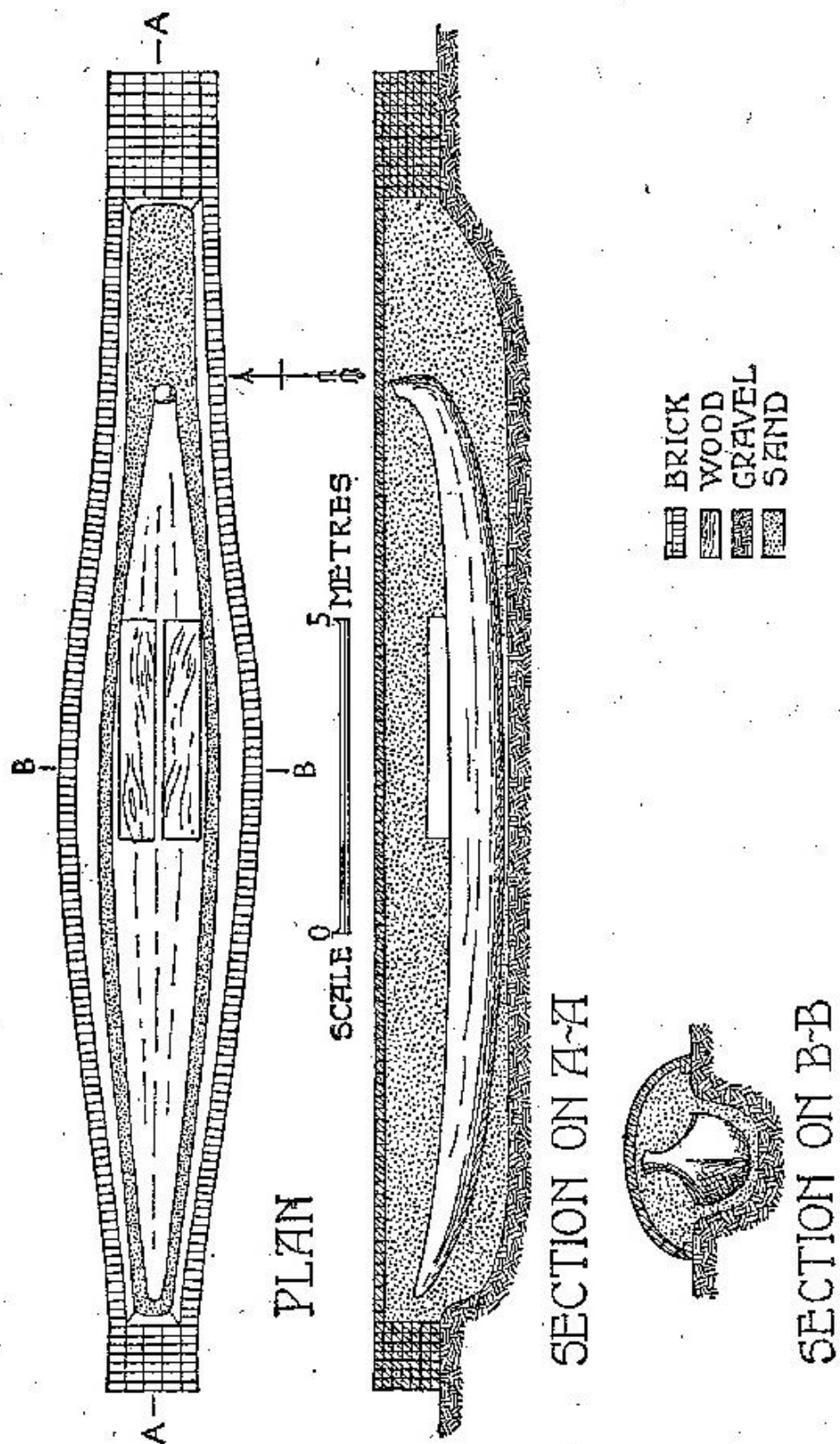


Fig. 78. Reconstruction of a boat burial

through the roof of the burial chamber, for there is no other method of access.

The burial chamber was, of course, the principal room in the tomb and we find the walls, in some cases, decorated with coloured mats stuck to the walls rather like thick wall-paper. In one of the royal burials at Sakkara, pilasters were panelled with wood inlaid with strips of gold plate, and the floor was covered with evenly laid thin wooden planks.

Although mummification was not known in archaic times, the body was carefully wrapped in linen and placed within a large wooden house-shaped sarcophagus, which stood in the centre of the burial chamber. We have only found one nobleman's body in its original burial position, where he lay flexed, on his left side with his head to the north. Although this may well be the conventional position of burial for the nobility, we cannot be certain on the evidence from only one tomb which had partly escaped the attention of tomb robbers.

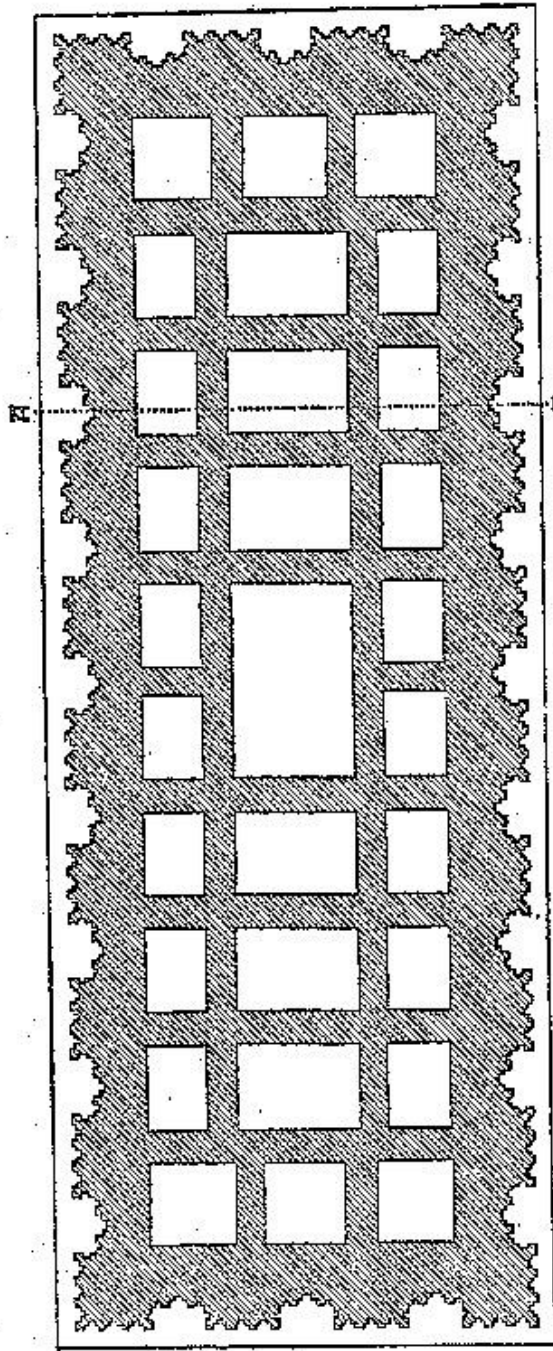
On the east side of the sarcophagus, a repast was laid out on alabaster and pottery dishes for the immediate sustenance of the spirit of the deceased, while reserve supplies of food and drink were stored near by (Pl. 29). In the burial chamber there were also chests and boxes containing garments, jewellery, games, etc., and ivory inlaid furniture, such as chairs, small tables, and beds. The other rooms adjacent to the burial also contained furniture, tools, and weapons, and in nearly every case one room was entirely reserved for the storage of food in the form of great joints of meat on pottery platters, bread kept in sealed globular pottery jars, and cheese in small tubular vessels. Other pottery dishes, bowls, and jars formed a sort of reserve dinner service, and were stacked in readiness in some corner of the room. In other rooms big wine jars were stacked in rows, each jar closed with a pottery cap covered with a clay sealing (Pl. 20). In the magazines of the superstructure, more equipment was stored, and in the

bigger tombs each room seemed to be reserved for special classes of objects, tools and weapons in one, games in another, and above all more stores of food and drink. Such great treasure houses as these could not escape the attention of plunderers for long, but sufficient remains for us to reconstruct with certainty the general set-up of these great tombs, which is shown in Fig. 79.

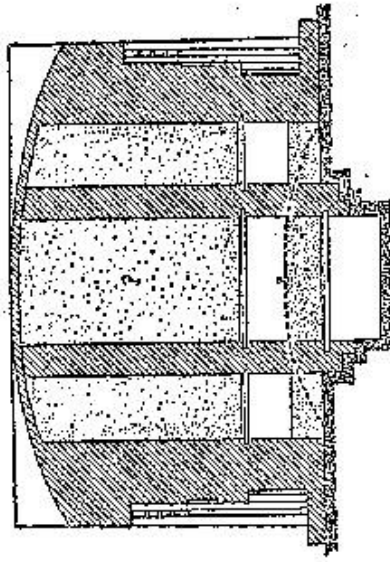
The tombs of the lesser nobility were similar in general design, although considerably smaller. Unfortunately, all examples of this class of tomb yet found have had their brick superstructures destroyed and there is no evidence to show whether they also had the elaborate panelled exterior of the great tomb; but on balance it is probable that they had. The niches would be built on the same scale, but there would of course be a smaller number, and on such a tomb as No. 1532 of Naga-ed-der (shown, restored, in Fig. 80) there would perhaps be two large niches on the short sides and four on the long. From other evidence, it would appear probable that magazines were not built within the superstructure, for the burial chamber and subsidiary rooms would be sufficient to accommodate the more limited wealth of the lesser nobility. In general the substructures of such tombs follow the general design of a central room for the burial and two rooms on each side of it for funerary equipment, which was similar in general character to that of their superiors, although naturally of poorer quality.

To illustrate the burials of the artisans and servant class who accompanied their masters in death, we have as examples only the tombs which surround the great funerary monuments of the kings and nobility. Those domestics were sacrificed, whether willingly or otherwise we do not know, but there is no reason to suppose that the arrangement of their burial was any different from other members of their class who had died naturally. The tomb consists of a single



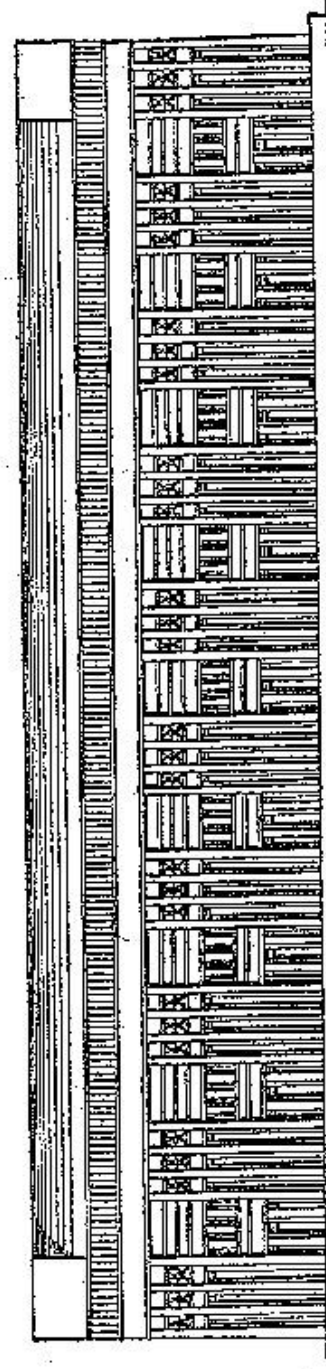


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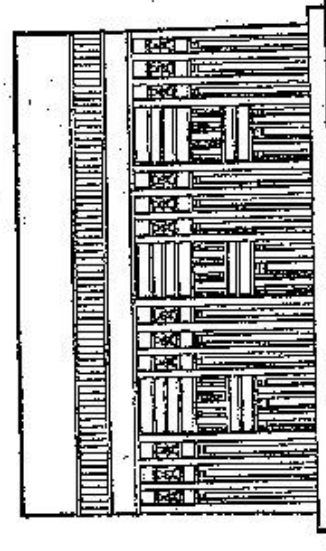


SECTION ON A-A

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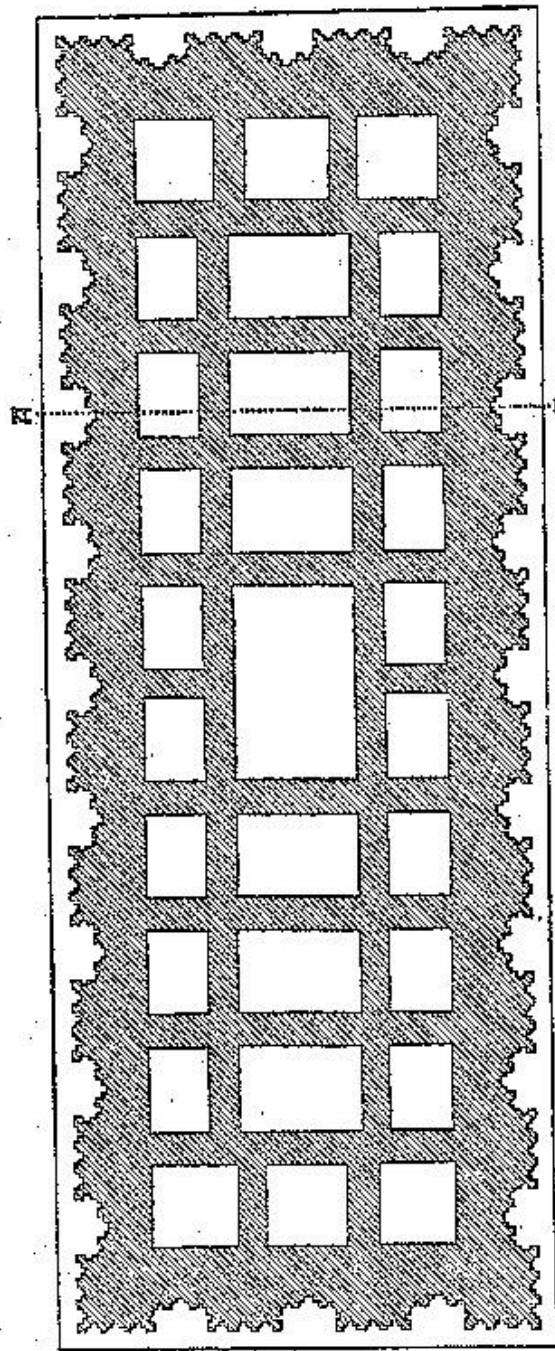


SIDE ELEVATION

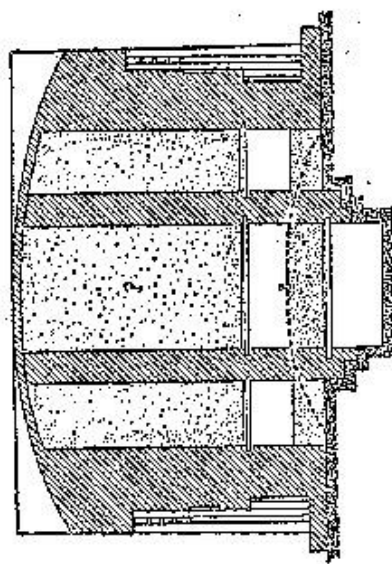


END ELEVATION

Fig. 79. Reconstruction of the exterior of a brick superstructure

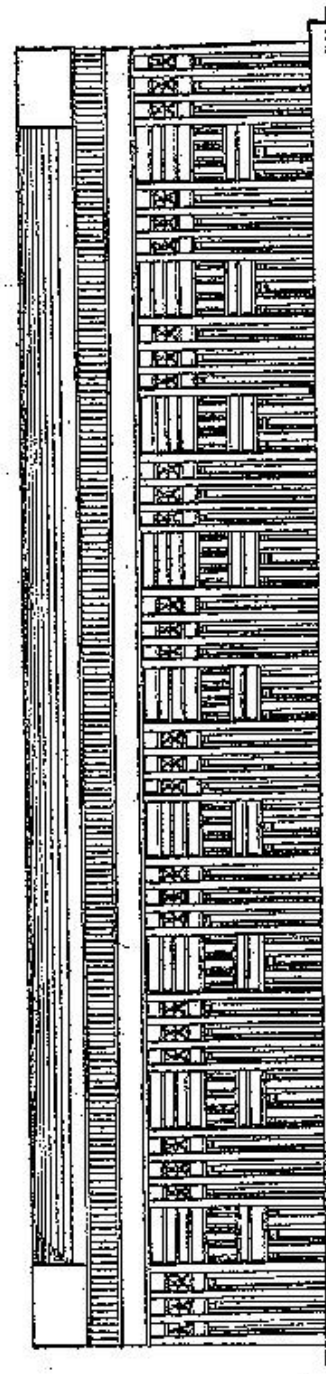


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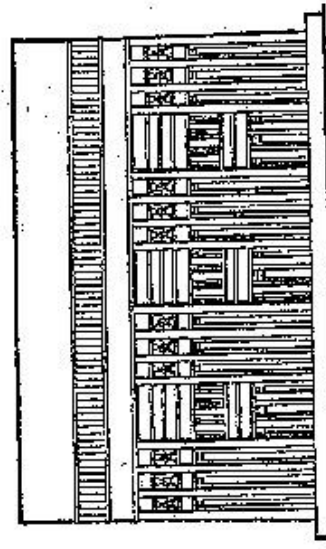


SECTION ON A-A

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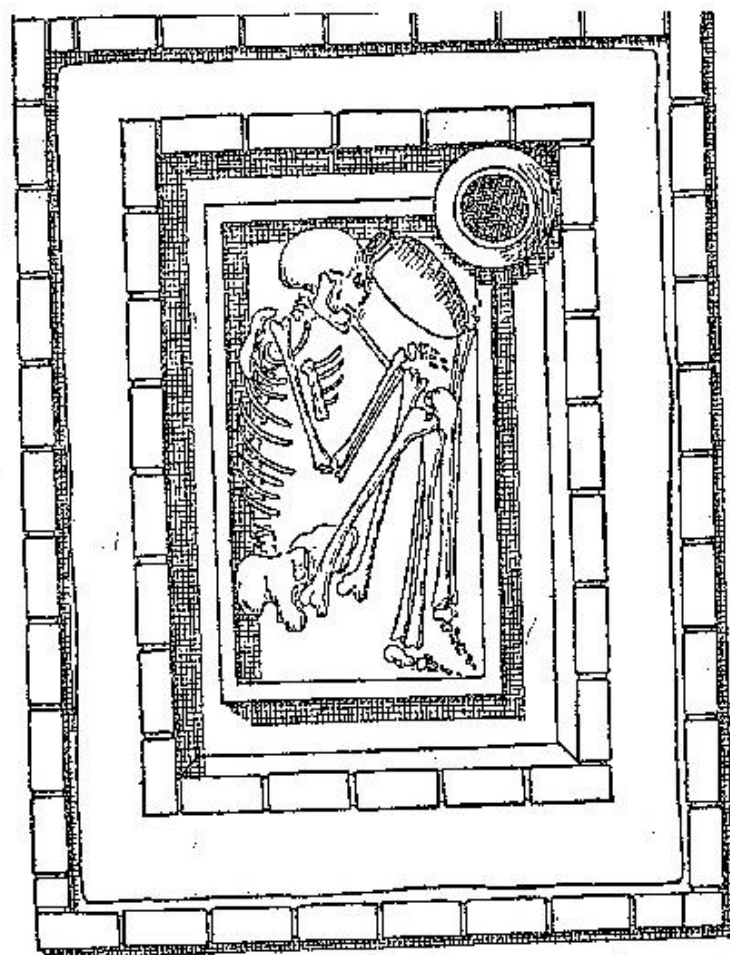


SIDE ELEVATION



END ELEVATION

Fig. 79. Reconstruction of the exterior of a brick superstructure



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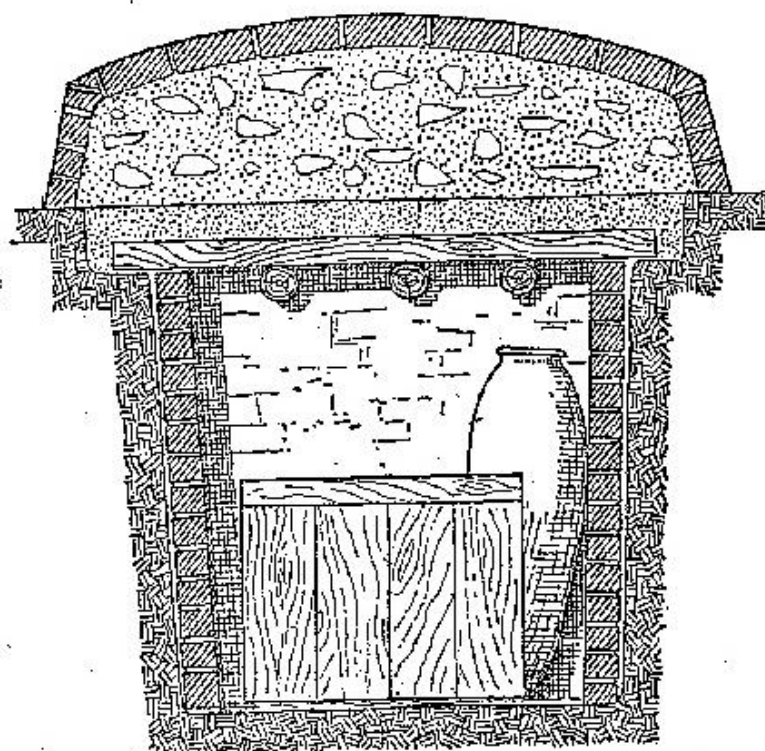


Fig. 81. Tomb of the artisan and servant class of the early First Dynasty



meat for the butcher, toilet utensils for the women. In the south at Abydos, small stone stelae crudely inscribed with the name of the deceased are frequently found with burials of this class, but because of the complete destruction of the superstructure, no indication remains of their original position; presumably they were on the surface, perhaps embedded in the superstructure (Fig. 25). At Sakkara, no such monuments have been discovered, but this may be because of the widespread removal of stone in this area.

The graves of the peasantry differ little from those of the late predynastic type and it is obvious that in the early part of the First Dynasty the mass of the people were unaffected by the funerary customs of their superiors who, as previously pointed out, were probably distinct racially. The graves are generally oval or oblong pits with rounded corners, cut in the gravel and surmounted after burial by a circular low mound made from the filling taken from the grave pit. The contracted body of the owner, nearly always on the right side with the head south, usually lay on a reed mat; but in the more wealthy burials it is sometimes encased by an erection of wooden planks. Pottery and stone vessels with copper and flint tools and toilet implements were placed by the side of the burial. After the interment, the grave was roofed with sticks and matting, above which was a filling of sand and rubble. Fig. 82 shows a typical burial of this character.

By the middle of the First Dynasty, the increase in size and elaboration of the great tombs of the kings and great nobles necessitated an easier means of entry for the burial, and in consequence we have the introduction of the stairway tomb in the reign of Udimu. The transition from the earlier type of tomb is shown in the sumptuous burial dated to Uadji, Udimu's predecessor, which we discovered at Sakkara in 1953 (Fig. 83). Although not a stairway tomb, its vast size and greatly enlarged substructure show the necessity for some

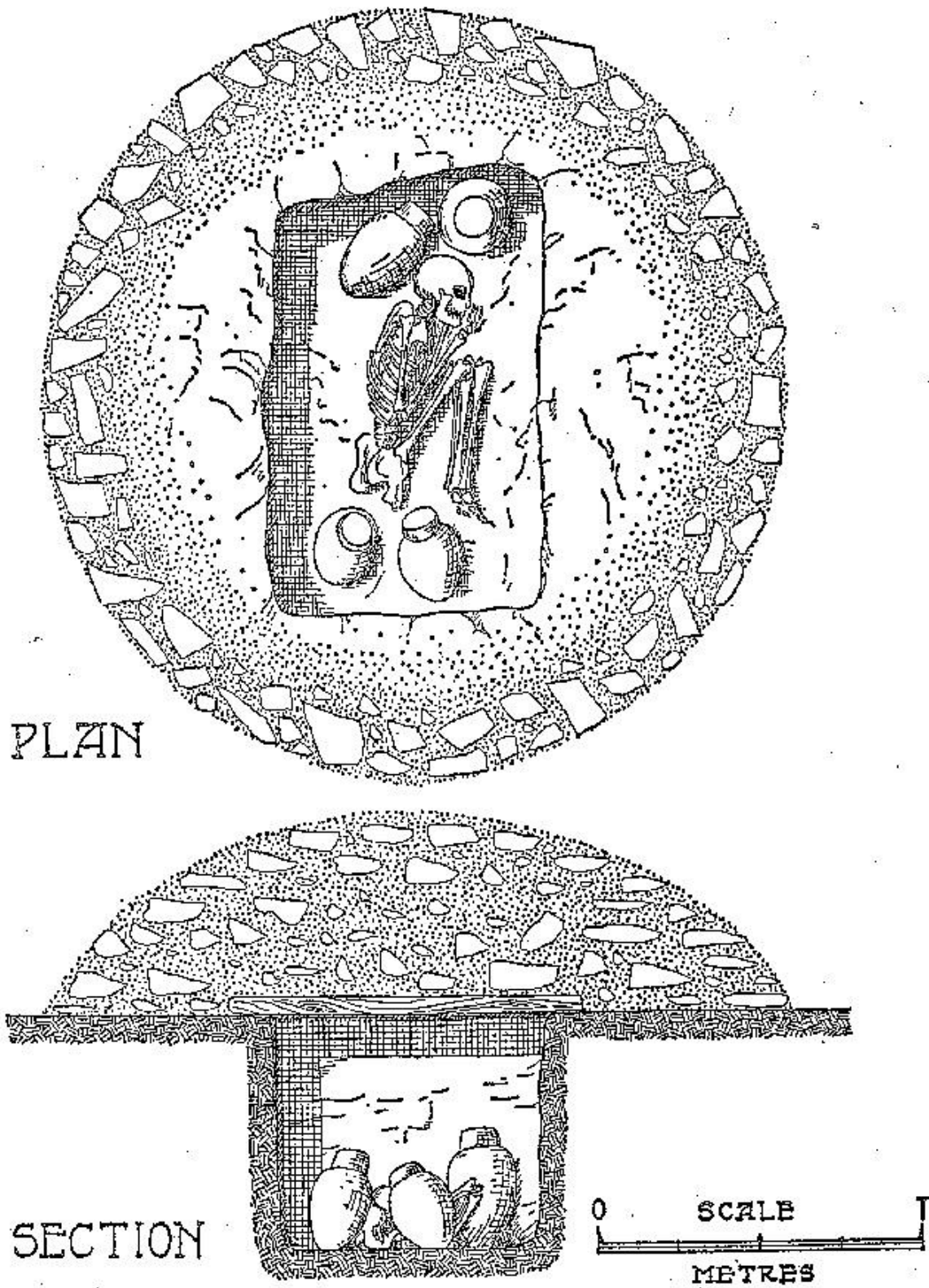


Fig. 82. Tomb of the poorer class of the early First Dynasty

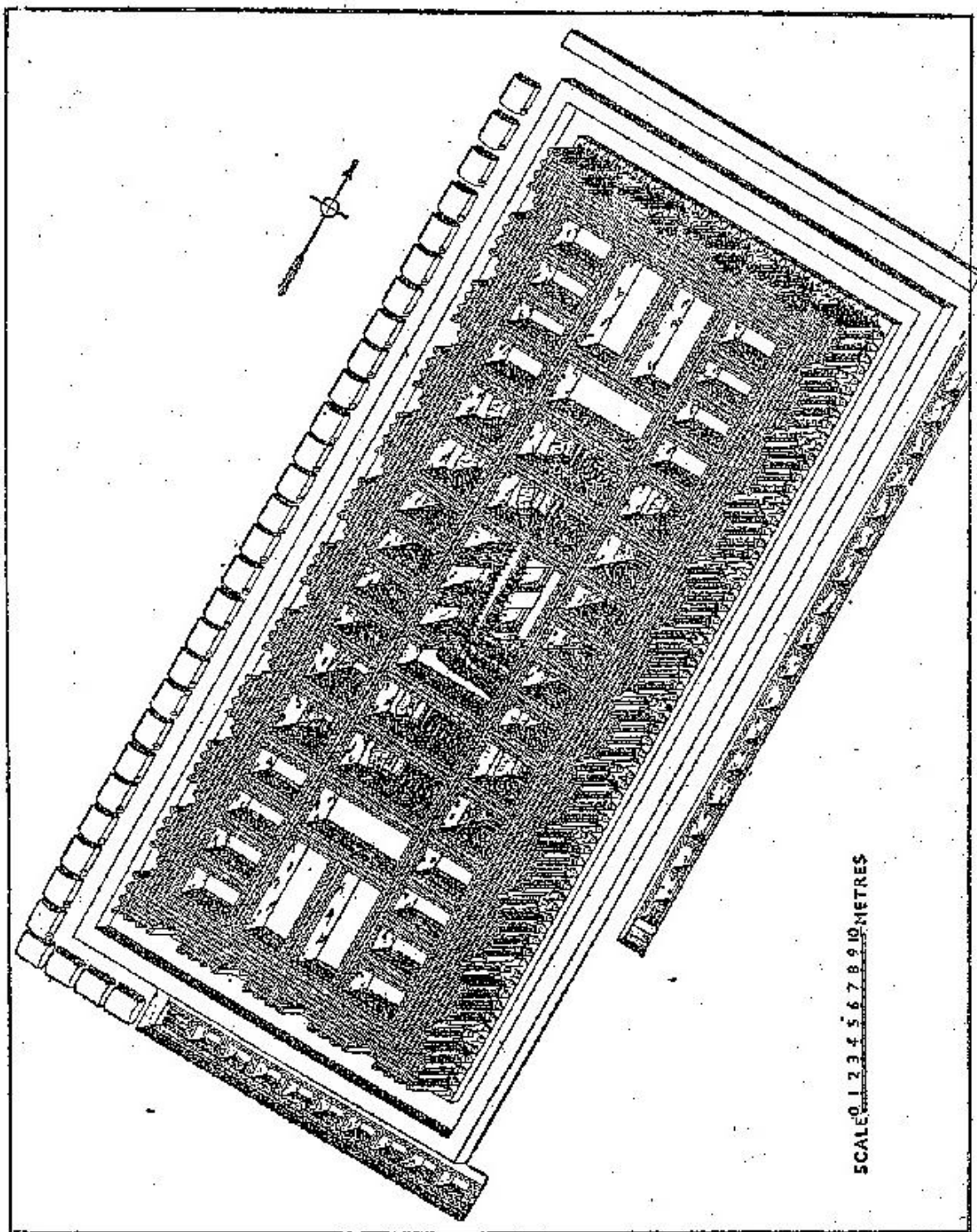


Fig. 83. Axonometric drawing of Tomb 3504 at Sakkara



method of access other than lowering the body and funerary equipment through the roof prior to completing work on the superstructure. The obvious answer to the problem was a descending stairway starting outside the superstructure which would allow for the completion of the vast edifice above the tomb, prior to the funeral. The stairway was always situated on the east side of the superstructure, descending direct to the burial chamber which perhaps, because of the easy access given by it, was cut to a much greater depth than in the earlier monuments. But the introduction of the stairway entrance also made entry to the tomb easier for potential robbers, and to prevent plundering, a system of blocking was introduced which although, as we now know, was inadequate, was nevertheless ingenious. This system of blocking took the form of great stone slabs lowered as portcullises down grooves cut in the side walls of the stairway (Fig. 84). Most of the large tombs have three stone portcullis blockings spaced at intervals, and this method of protection survived in the pyramid period of later times. The design of the superstructure remained unaltered and, as with tombs of the earlier type, its exterior was embellished with recessed panelling on all four sides of the great oblong mass within which were the magazines to hold surplus funerary equipment. But the planning of the substructure shows considerable change, for apart from being deeper, the burial chamber was larger and less importance was attached to the subsidiary rooms which sometimes are built at so high a level that access to them can only be gained through small doors set high up near the ceiling of the main room. In the southern type of tomb of Udimu at Abydos, there are no subsidiary rooms in the substructure which consists only of the great burial chamber.

The big tombs of the middle of the dynasty show that, apart from the introduction of the stairway, it was a period of considerable architectural change and experiment, and

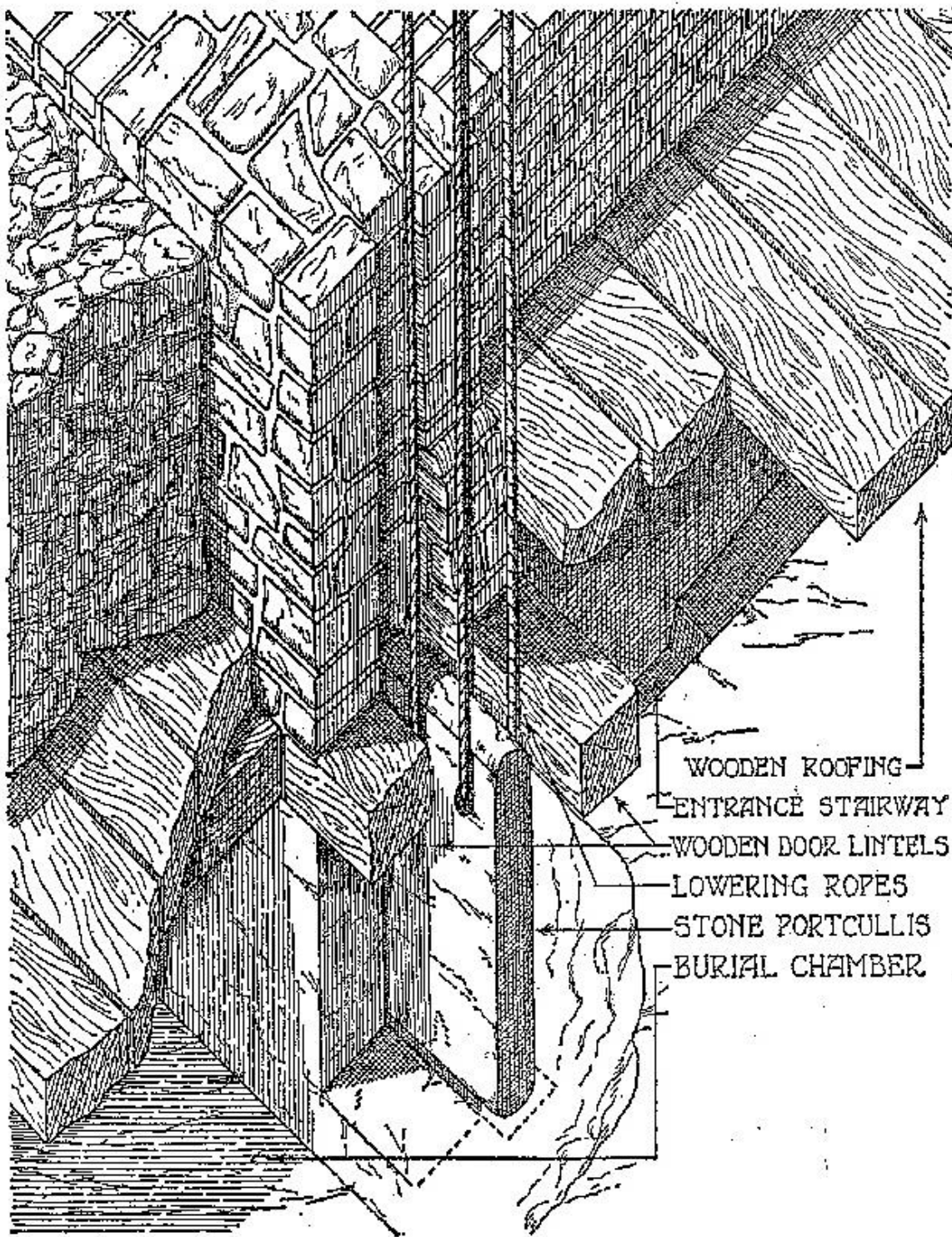


Fig. 84. Detail of portcullis blocking in stairway entrance

each monument shows differences in design. Most noteworthy of these is a tomb at Sakkara which is dated to King Enezib and which may well be his tomb. When first excavated, it appeared to be a conventional form of the period with a typical mastaba superstructure decorated with recessed panelling. A descending stairway led down to a burial chamber flanked by two subsidiary rooms built at a higher level. But in clearing the interior of the mastaba superstructure in search of the usual magazines, we found a second superstructure concealed within the first. This structure was of entirely different design, being in step pyramid form, as shown in Fig. 45. Although it is only in this tomb that we have found such a structure preserved, traces of the foundations of what may have been similar buildings have been noted in other large tombs of the period, and we must consider the possibility of its being a common feature of all the royal tombs at Sakkara.

As has been pointed out on p. 84, the original form was a rectangular earthen tumulus with a brick casing, as in the tomb of Queen Her-nit, which developed into the step pyramid that we find in the tomb of Enezib. Of this evolution there can be little doubt, and the question then arises of what bearing this strange feature has on the problem of the origin and development of the pyramid structure of later times. It is perhaps premature to put forward a hypothesis on so important a question before the achievement of further discoveries and the result of further research, but at least a tentative suggestion may perhaps be excused.

It would appear that the form of superstructure above the tombs of the kings of Upper Egypt originally consisted of the rectangular tumulus faced with brick which developed into the superstructure of elongated pyramid form. In Lower Egypt, the superstructure above the royal tombs took the form of the mastaba with its panelled façade. At Sakkara,



notably in the case of the tombs of Queen Her-nit and Enezib, the two forms of superstructure were welded together in one building: the tumulus pyramid directly over the burial, and surrounded and covered by the walls of the palace façade mastaba. Comparison of the plans of the tombs of Her-nit and Enezib with that of the step pyramid enclosure of King Zoser of the Third Dynasty reveals such similarities in design and proportion that we may well consider the design of the latter to be a development of the composite royal tomb of the First Dynasty (Fig. 85).

Our knowledge of the religious thought and symbolism behind the architectural designs of the funerary structures of early Egypt is almost non-existent. But on the grounds of pure architectural evolution it is not unreasonable to envisage the gradual reduction of a palace façade mastaba to a recessed enclosure wall which surrounded the greatly enlarged and heightened pyramid structure covering the burial chamber.

It is not possible within the compass of this book to expand this interesting question, but progress in this research is being made, and it is hoped that future excavation, particularly in the tombs of the Second Dynasty, may yield evidence in support or otherwise of what at present can only be offered as a rather nebulous hypothesis.

In the arrangement of the burial and the funerary equipment there was no change and the big wooden sarcophagus was surrounded by food and drink and all the owner's most precious possessions. The question of sustenance for the spirit of the owner is perhaps stressed more in the burials of this period than in the earlier ones – vast quantities of meat, bread, and wine were stored in the magazines, and in one tomb we found built-in grain bins, so that the owner could replenish his stock of bread when the need arose. Another example of such forethought was the supply of natural flint nodules buried with flint knives, so that

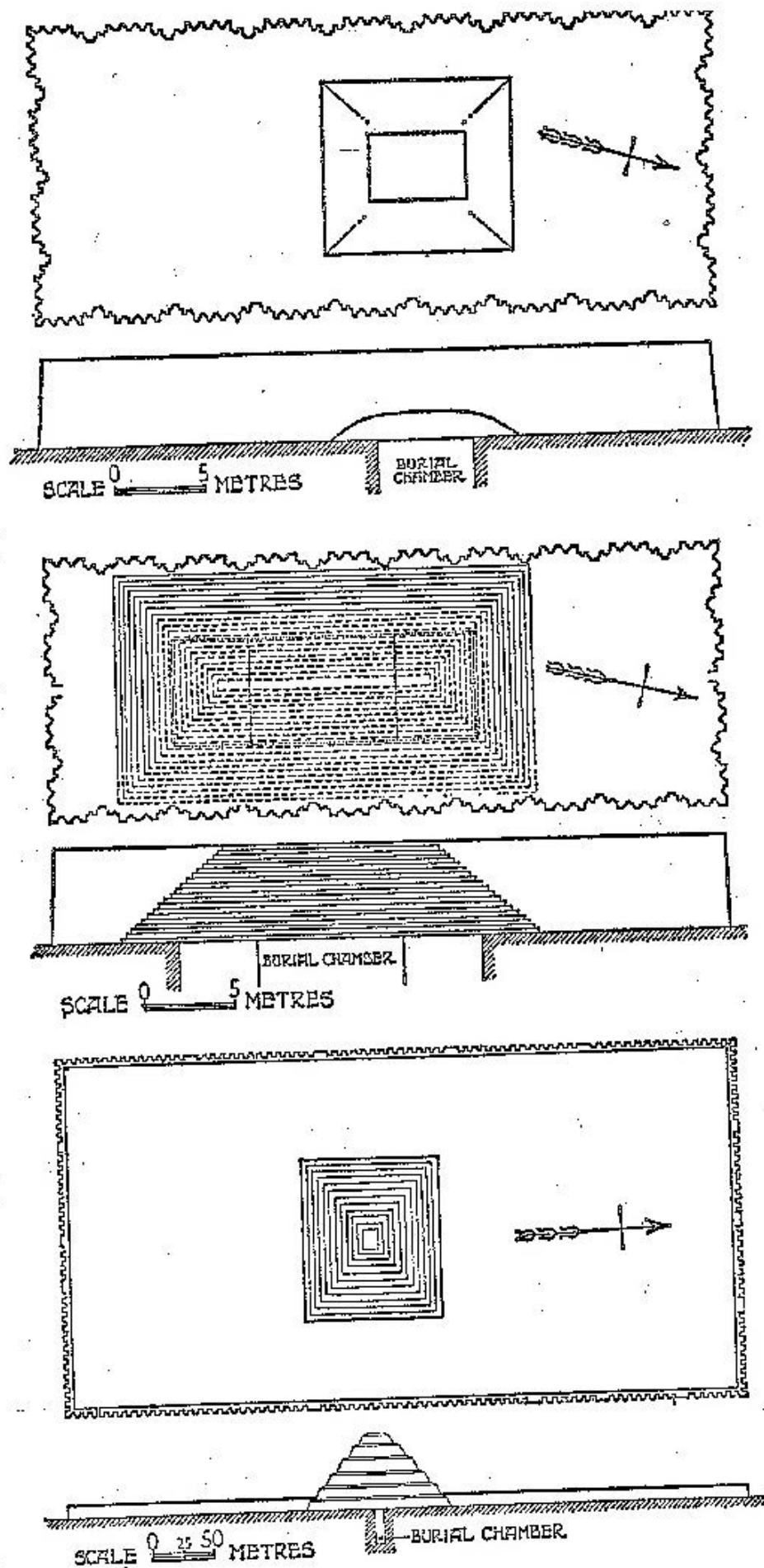


Fig. 85. Sketch-plans of the tombs of Her-nit (early First Dynasty), Enezib (late First Dynasty), and Zoser (early Third Dynasty)

the deceased could make more of these tools should they be broken.

The tombs of the lesser nobility are just smaller editions of the larger burials, but, as in the earlier parts of the dynasty, the smaller superstructures appear to have had a solid core of rubble or brick, with no magazines within the interior. Examples with a panelled exterior such as No. 1374 at Helwan (Fig. 86) are typical of the period, but a plain façade to the superstructure is also common, particularly in the smaller tombs. The substructure consists of a burial chamber with two or more subsidiary rooms with floors at a higher level, all roofed with timber.

With burials of the artisan class, there appears to be little or no change from those of the earlier part of the dynasty which are described above. The only new development appears to be the introduction of a false door at the south end of the east façade of the superstructure (Fig. 87). The mass of the common people continued to bury their dead in the pit graves of their ancestors, raising above them a circular superstructure of rubble. But graves of the more important among them begin to show a tendency to copy, to adopt some of the structural refinements of their superiors. The use of brick linings to the oblong pits and the placing of the contracted bodies in some primitive form of wooden coffin becomes more common. Fig. 88 shows a typical burial of this type.

In the latter part of the First Dynasty there were considerable changes in the architectural design of tombs of every class, and although some of the greater monuments tend to retain the general plan of earlier times, most of those that can be dated to the close of the period show a fundamental change in conception. With the notable exception of the great tomb dated to King Ka'a at Sakkara (Fig. 53), the recessed panelling on the exterior of the superstructure disappears and the plain face of the exterior walls is relieved



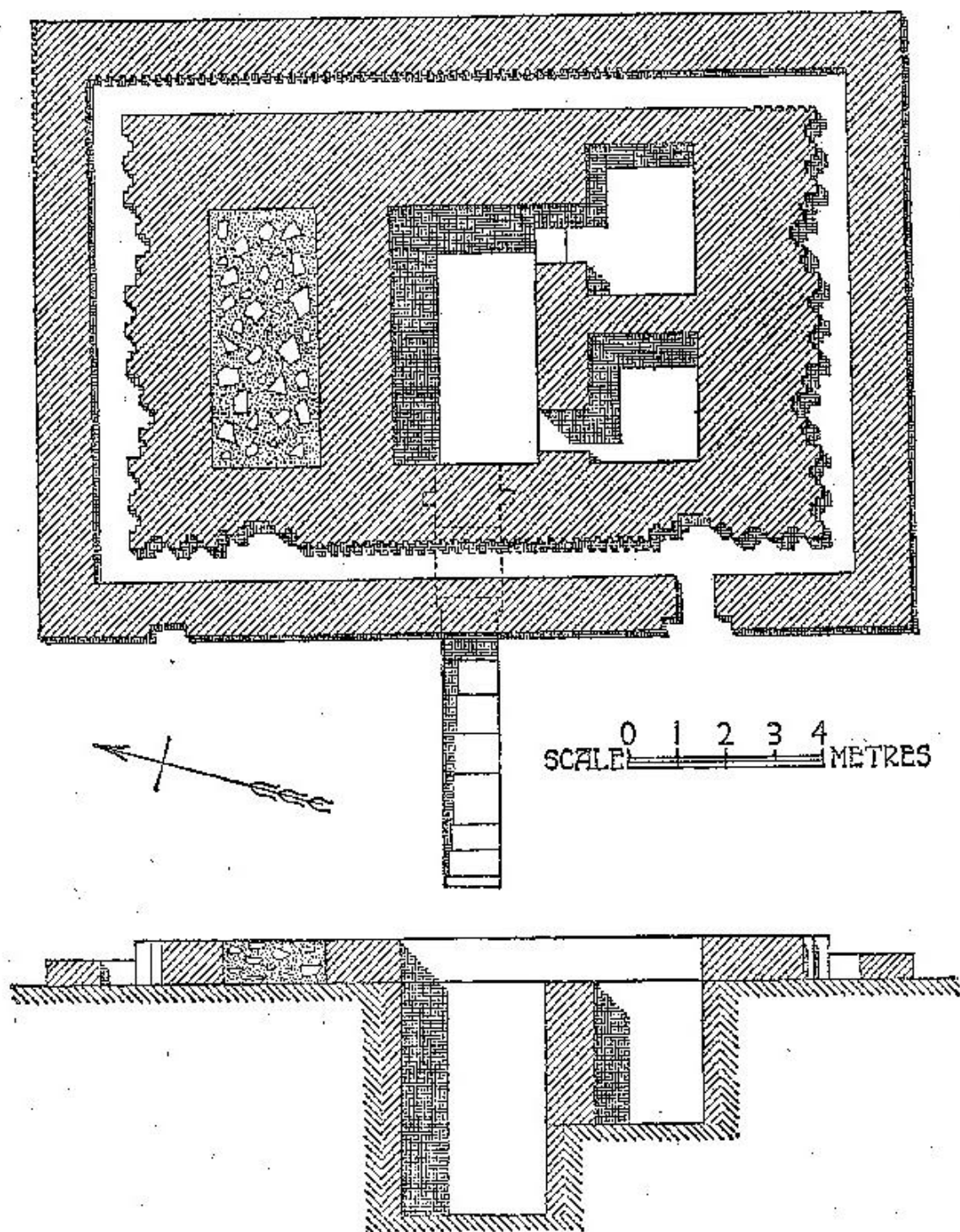


Fig. 86. Plan of Tomb 1374 at Helwan

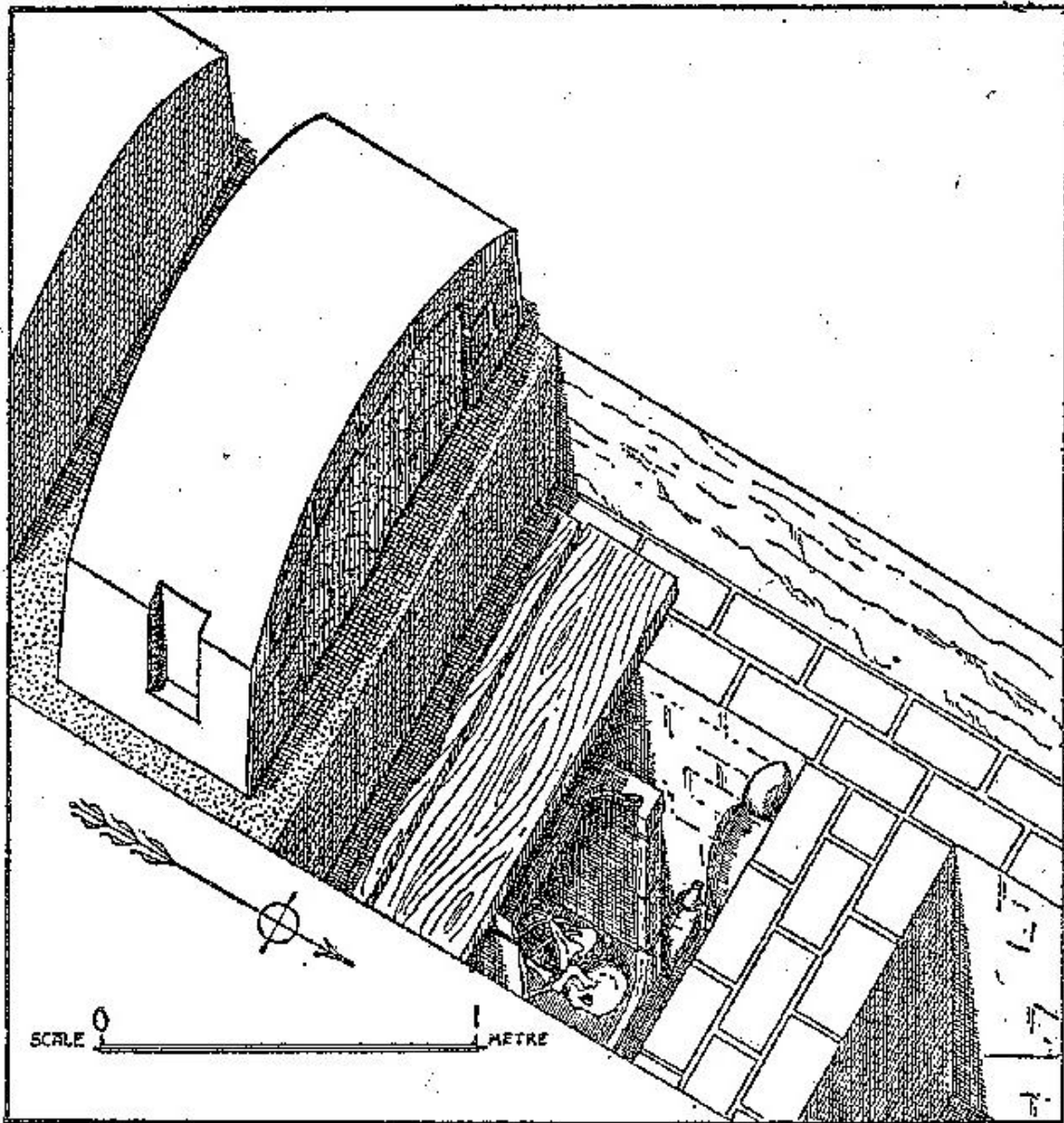
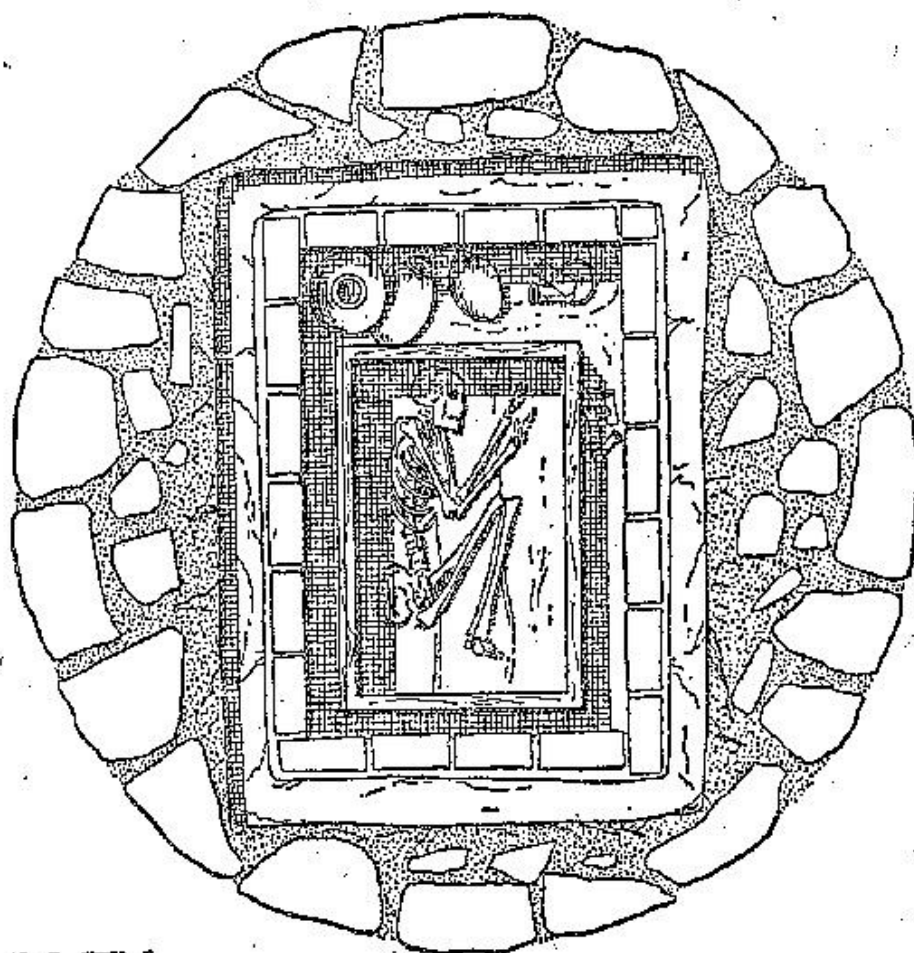
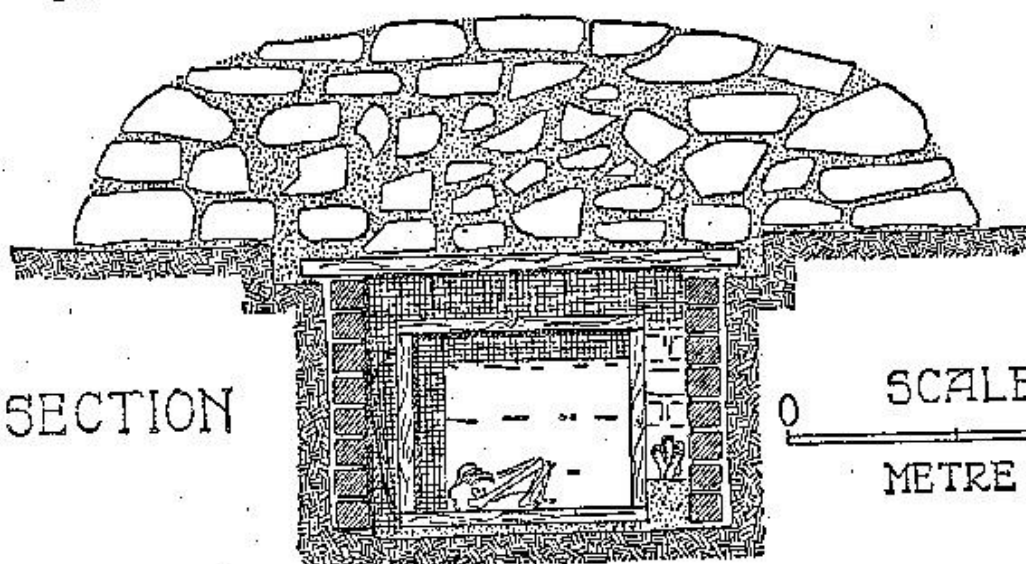


Fig. 87. Axonometric view of a subsidiary tomb  
of the middle First Dynasty

only by two false doors at the south and north ends of the east façade. Moreover, the superstructure is no longer hollow with magazines, but has a solid core of rubble or brickwork. The direct stairway entrance to the substructure gives place to one of L-shaped plan, which although starting on the east side of the tomb, enters the burial chamber from the north. With this innovation the axis of the substructure is changed from east-west to north-south and the rooms subsidiary to the burial chamber are no longer immediately adjacent to it,



PLAN



SECTION



Fig. 88. Poor-class burial of the middle First Dynasty



but are on each side of the entrance stairway with which they are connected by doorways. The north-south axis of the substructure is usual, but in the larger tombs there are exceptions and in these the old east-west axis is retained with a direct entrance stairway from the east. But the new plan of subsidiary rooms opening from the stairway before it reached the burial chamber has been adopted even where the earlier rule of the burial axis has been retained. The two great monuments of Ka'a at Abydos and Sakkara show this feature, but in general the new design (as shown in Fig. 89) of the sub-

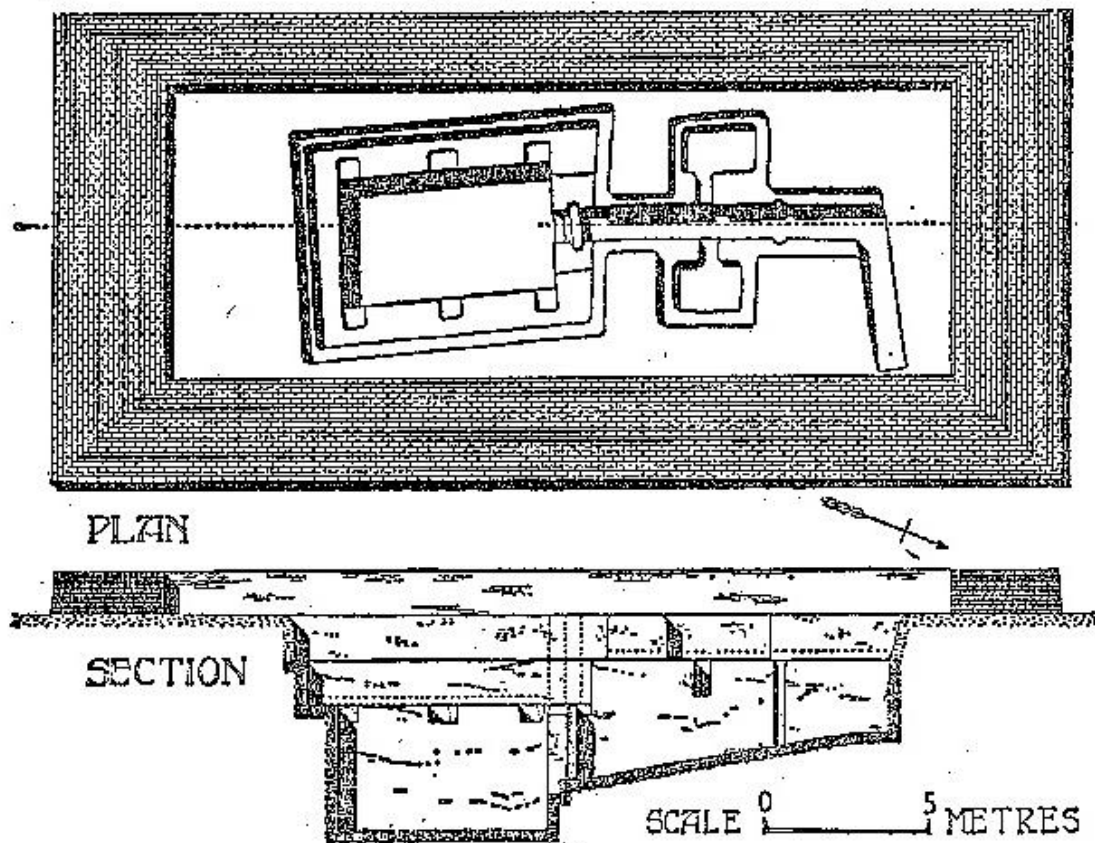


Fig. 89. Plan and section of Tomb 3338 at Sakkara

structure was prevalent at the close of the dynasty and was the direct forerunner of the Second Dynasty design and ultimately of tomb planning of much later periods, surviving even in the rock tombs of the New Kingdom more than 1500 years later.

The change in architectural design did not extend to the

method of burial which, as far as can be ascertained, remained the same. However, one fact must be noted: apart from the royal burials, the funerary equipment appears more limited in quantity than in earlier times and this may be a reflection of the extra expenditure forced on the owner by the erection of more elaborate tomb structures. The burial chamber now appears to be sufficient for the storage of all the funerary furniture and the contents of the subsidiary rooms were restricted to food and drink for the spirit of the deceased. The burial of servants and retainers around the burial of the kings and great nobles, although it appears to survive in the

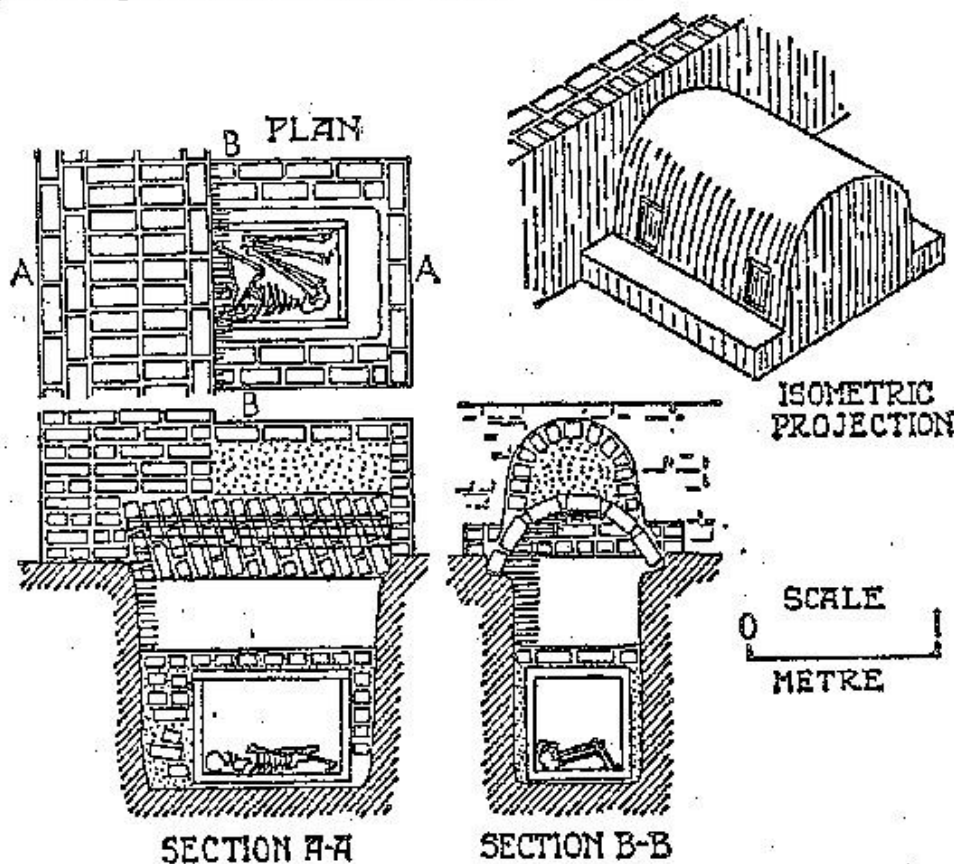


Fig. 90. Tomb of the artisan or servant class of the late First Dynasty south, has ceased in the north, and although subsidiary tombs have been found within the enclosure of a big tomb of the period, at Sakkara, their arrangement does not suggest that the owners died other than natural deaths.

Recent excavations at Helwan have revealed many tombs

of the lesser nobility which can be dated to the latter part of the dynasty, and these burials conform to the same plan and general arrangements as the bigger structures at Sakkara.

The graves of the artisan class differ little from those of earlier times, except that the superstructure is higher, with two false doors at the north and south ends of the east façade. Here, again, we are dependent for our knowledge of the design of such tombs on subsidiary burials, but we have no reason to doubt that they are fairly representative of the burial installations of this class of society during the period. Fig. 90 shows details of the construction of tombs of this type and the general arrangement of the burial.

The graves of the peasantry show no change in the latter part of the dynasty, except perhaps a further increase in the use of brick linings to the burial pits and the use of coffins in the case of the more wealthy interments.

With the advent of the Second Dynasty, a radical development in the design and construction of funerary structures took place. Even as early as the middle of the First Dynasty there are isolated examples of the burial chamber being excavated in the rock and not formed by an open working with an artificial roof. But this practice was comparatively rare and it was only at the end of the First Dynasty that the system of open working was abandoned in favour of excavation in regard to the subterranean parts of the tomb structure (Fig. 91).

In the earlier half of the Second Dynasty, the tombs of the great nobles followed closely on the design common at the end of the preceding dynasty with the difference that the L-shaped entrance stairway descended to a greater depth and both the magazines on each side of it and the burial chamber itself were excavated and not formed by open workings (Fig. 93). No longer is the entrance passage roofed with timber, but great stone flags were found more practical. In the



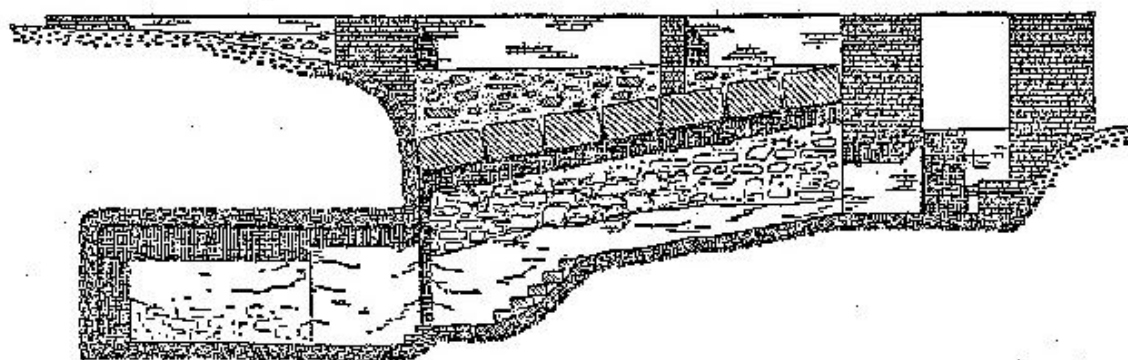
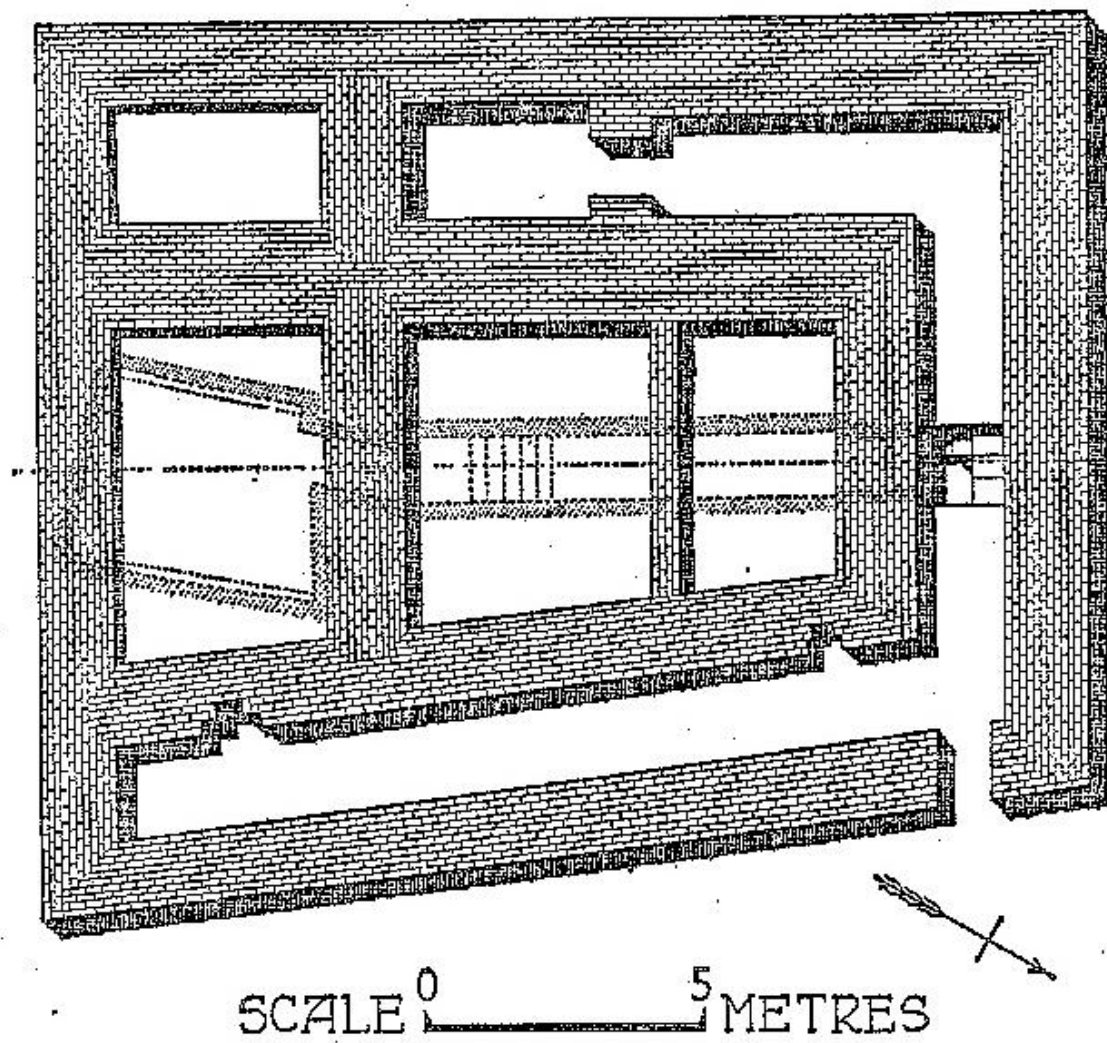


Fig. 91. Rock-cut tomb of the late First Dynasty

rock-cut burial chamber we have the forerunner of the subterranean 'house' of the later part of the dynasty, for it is divided into separate rooms with the burial compartment on the west side. But the construction still followed the pattern of the First Dynasty in dividing the compartment into separate rooms by brick walls instead of cutting the various chambers out of the living rock (Fig. 92). Henceforth the burial com-

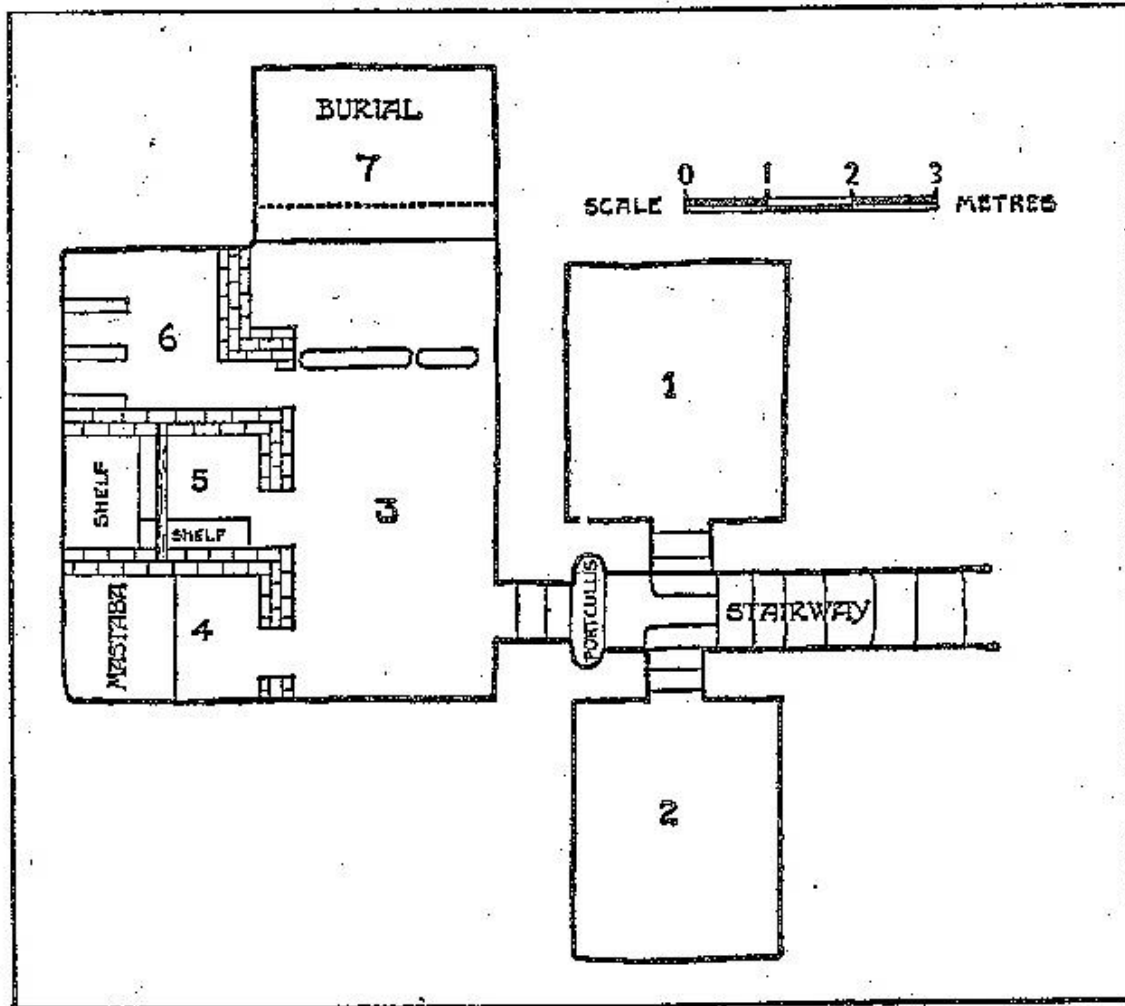


Fig. 92. Substructure of an early Second Dynasty tomb

partment corresponding to the bedroom of the deceased's house in life is always on the west side of the complex of rooms which represented the other parts of his domicile. The wooden coffin was, in these earlier Second Dynasty tombs, placed on a raised platform just as his bed would be so placed in his home in life. It is unfortunate that all such

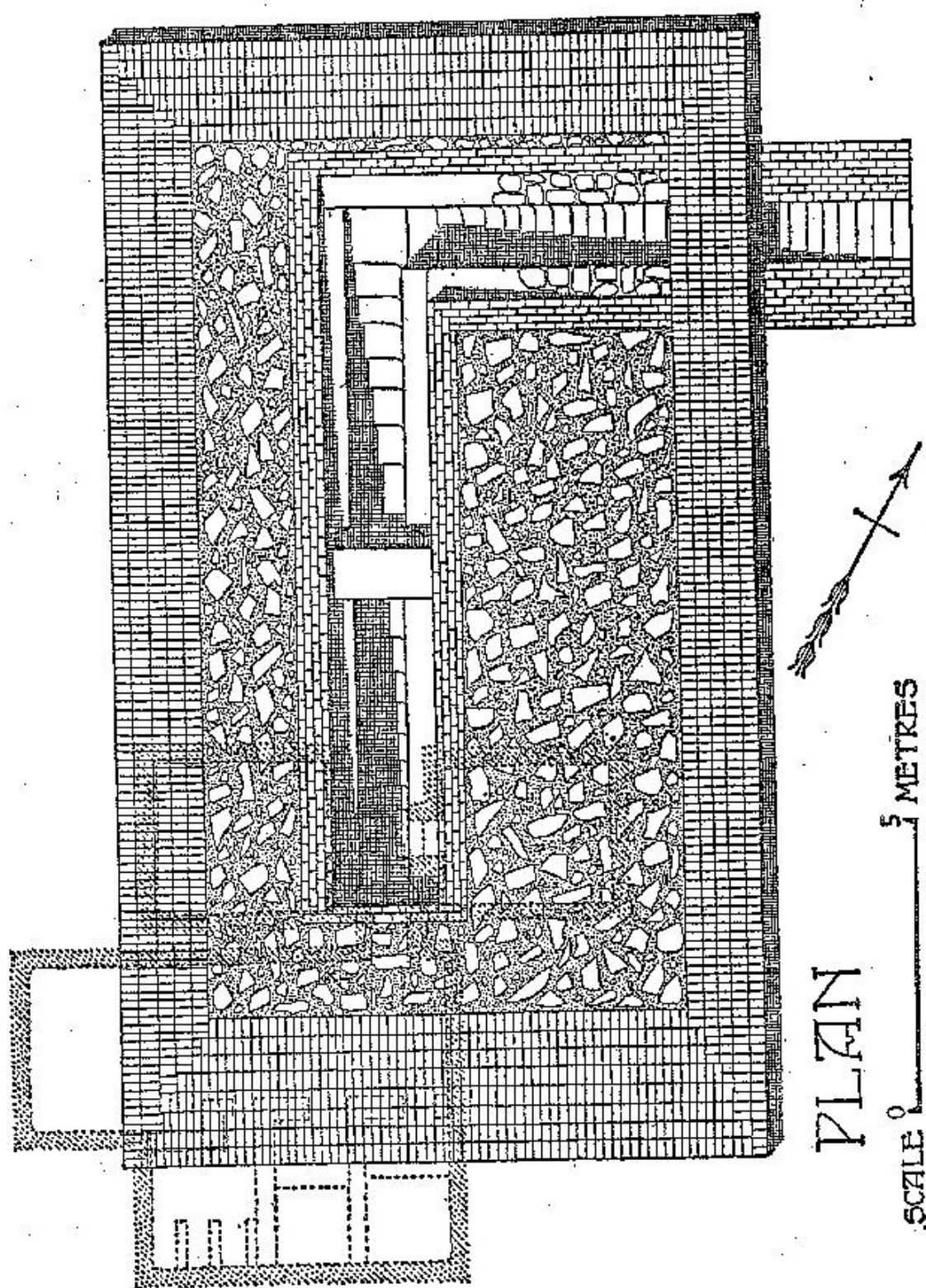
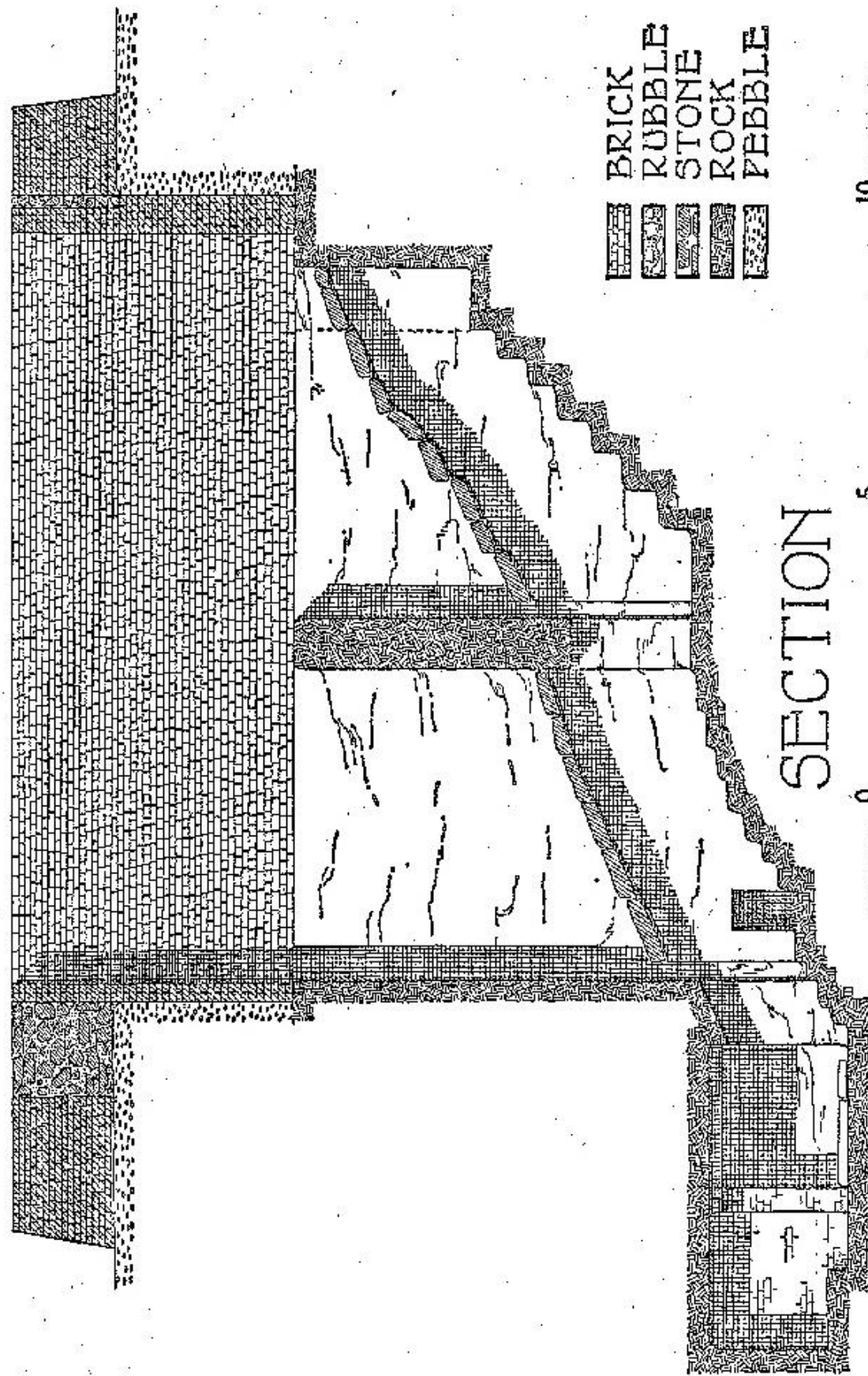


Fig. 93. Plan and section of an early Second Dynasty tomb





BRICK  
RUBBLE  
STONE  
ROCK  
PEBBLE

SECTION

SCALE 0 5 10 METRES

tombs of the period have been so ransacked by repeated plundering that it is impossible to ascertain with certainty the original position of the funerary furniture; but the custom of placing a meal served in pottery and stone vessels on the east side of the coffin is definitely established (Pl. 29), as well as the storage of extra food supplies in the exterior magazine outside the house, off the entrance passage. The superstructure above the tomb was solid with a core of rubble or brick and no magazines were built within it. However, the practice of burying offerings within the superstructure had not quite died out and we have found some big tombs of the early Second Dynasty with large quantities of pottery vessels buried within the rubble core of the superstructure, in haphazard groups, rather like currants in a cake (Pls. 12 and 13). But this was only a survival of a funerary custom which was out of fashion even in the latter part of the previous dynasty, and it was not a common practice, existing only in isolated burials at Sakkara.

The only distinction between the big tombs of the great nobles and those of the lesser nobility is one of size and a reduction in the number of rooms in the subterranean 'house' which usually consists of one chamber with a side compartment for the coffin (Fig. 94).

As the custom of burying retainers round the tombs of the nobility had ceased, we have no evidence of the form of burial of the artisan class, but as in the previous dynasty they were probably miniature copies of those of the upper class (Fig. 95).

In the latter half of the dynasty the period of experiment in the design of the excavated substructure appears to have come to an end and a type common to all had evolved, varying only in size and the number of rooms, according to the wealth of the owner. The subterranean 'house' followed a stereotyped design which probably reflected the general

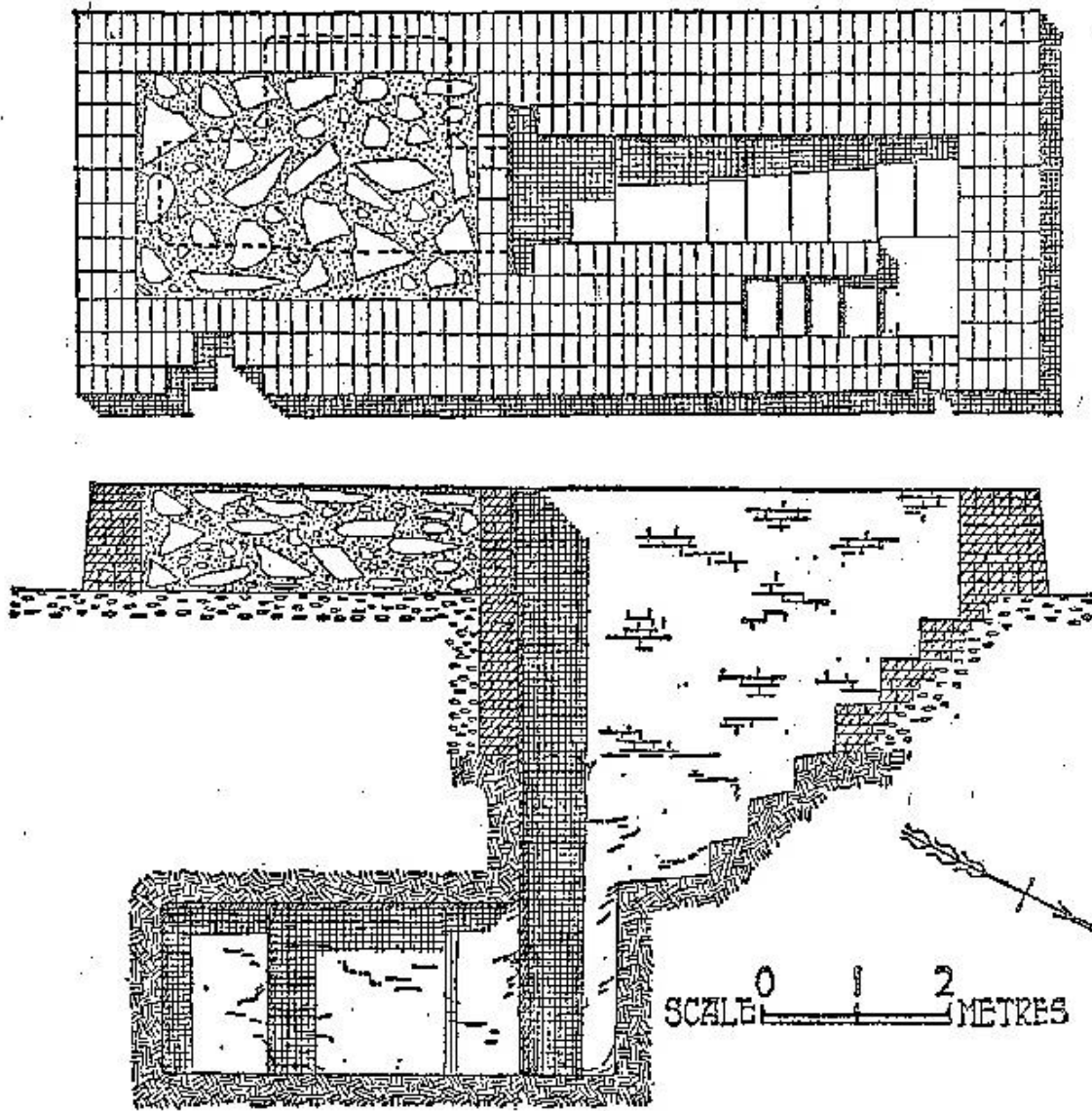


Fig. 94. Plan and section of a Second Dynasty tomb of the middle class

arrangement of dwellings of the period, with its great reception hall on each side of which are bedrooms for guests, etc. (Fig. 96). The innermost part of the 'house' was reserved for the household, consisting of the master's bedroom (burial chamber) opening from the west side of a living-room, on the other side of which is the harem quarter. Both the harem and the master's quarters have a double access to a bathroom and lavatory. The magazines opening from the stairway entrance represent the store-rooms outside the house, and naturally it is in these that food, wine, and surplus funerary furniture was placed.



The only two funerary structures of the Second Dynasty that can definitely be assigned to royalty are those of Perabsen and Kha-sekhemui at Abydos (Figs. 60 and 66). Both these tombs are entirely different in design from those of the same period in the north, which is strange, for although the superstructures of the southern tombs must have been different, the substructures at Abydos follow the same general lines of development as the funerary structures in the north. Both monuments follow the general design of a free-standing burial chamber surrounded by rows of magazines all

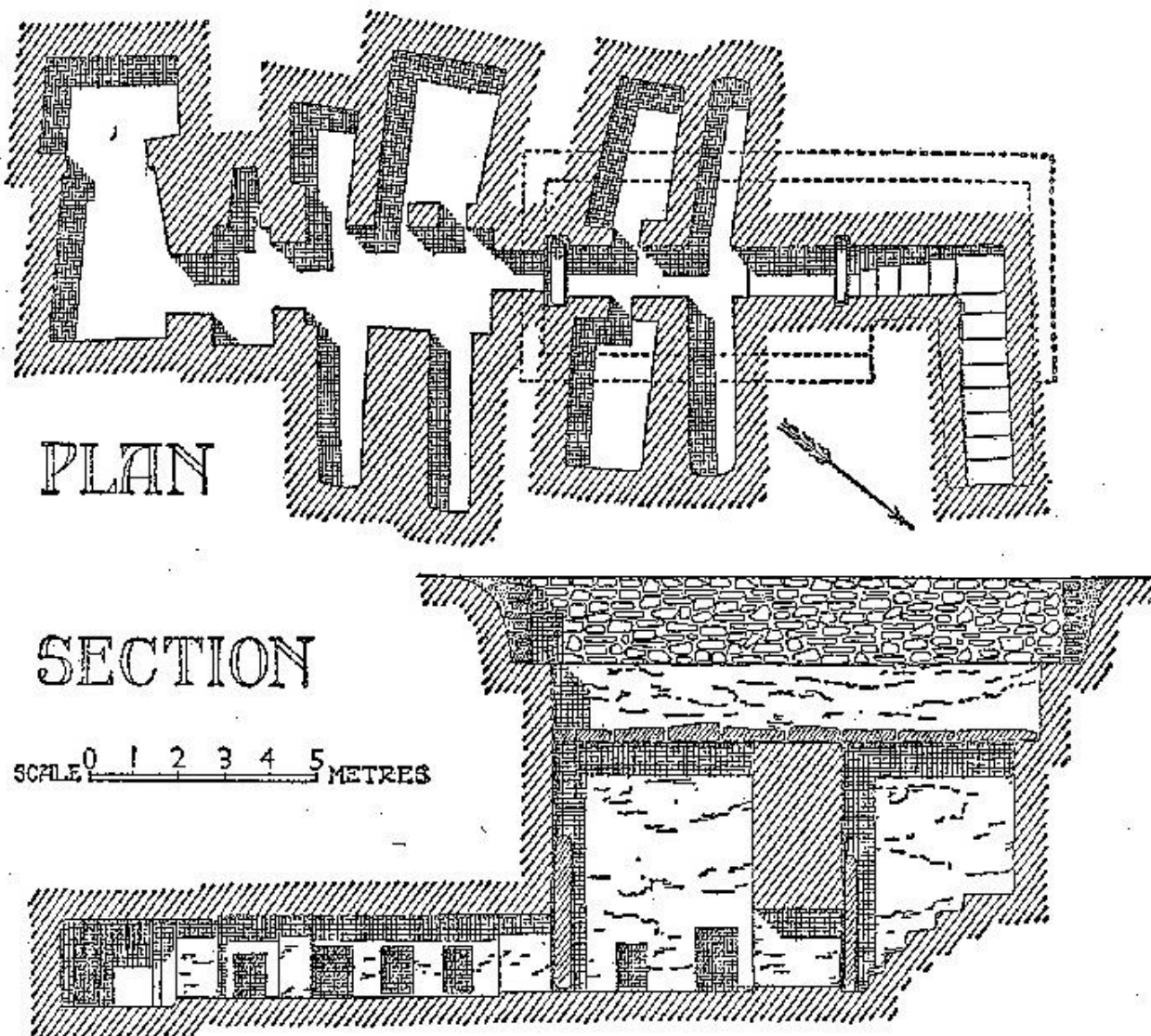


Fig. 96. Plan and section of the substructure of a late Second Dynasty tomb

# ARCHAIC EGYPT

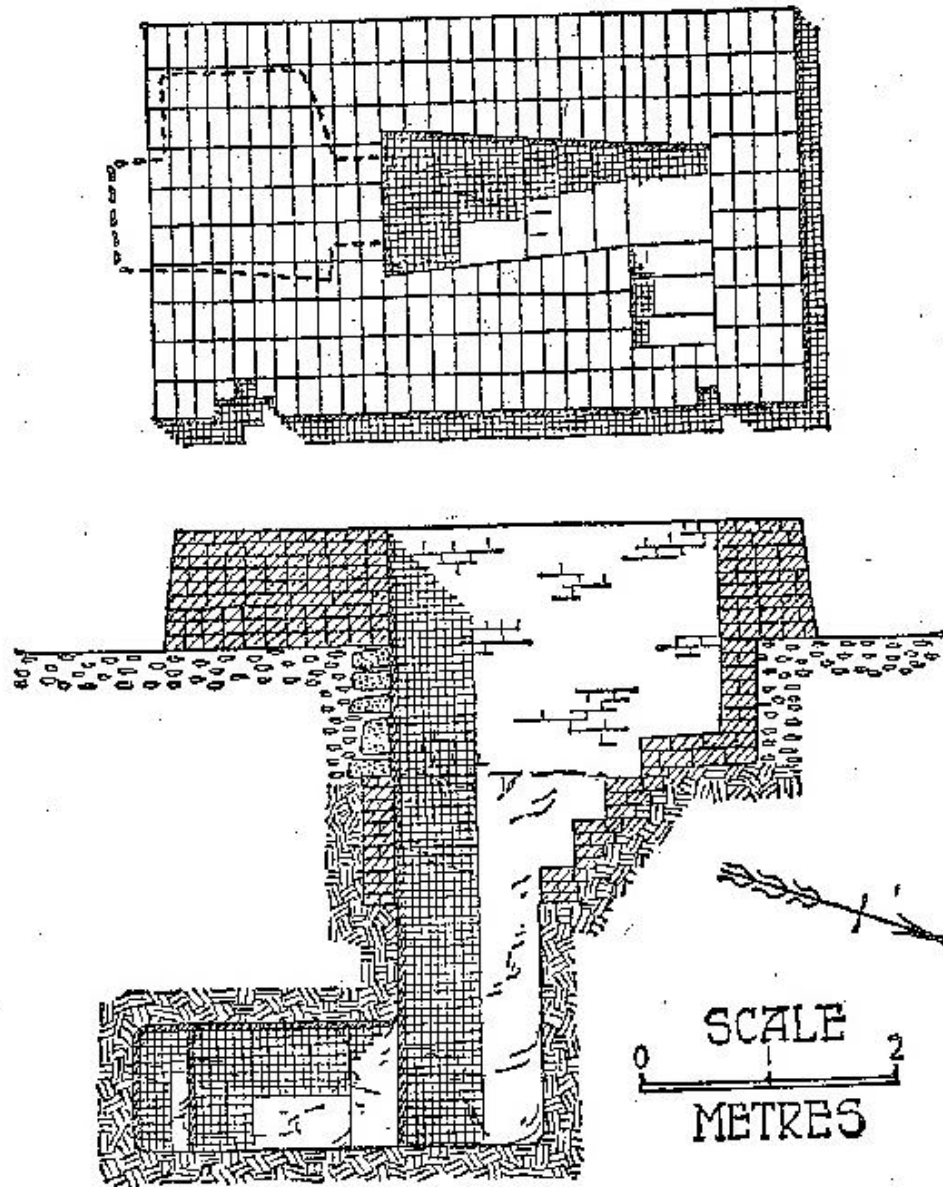


Fig. 95. Plan and section of a Second Dynasty tomb of the poorer class

The system of blocking the stairway entrance with stone portcullises continued and the number of such safeguards varies between one and three according to the size of the tomb.

The brick superstructure was solid with a filling of rubble, and the exterior walls were plain with two false doors, the larger at the south end and the smaller at the north end of the east façade. It would appear that the rubble core of the superstructure was deposited after the burial, for, unlike the First Dynasty practice, the head of the entrance stairway was not outside the superstructure but was buried below it.

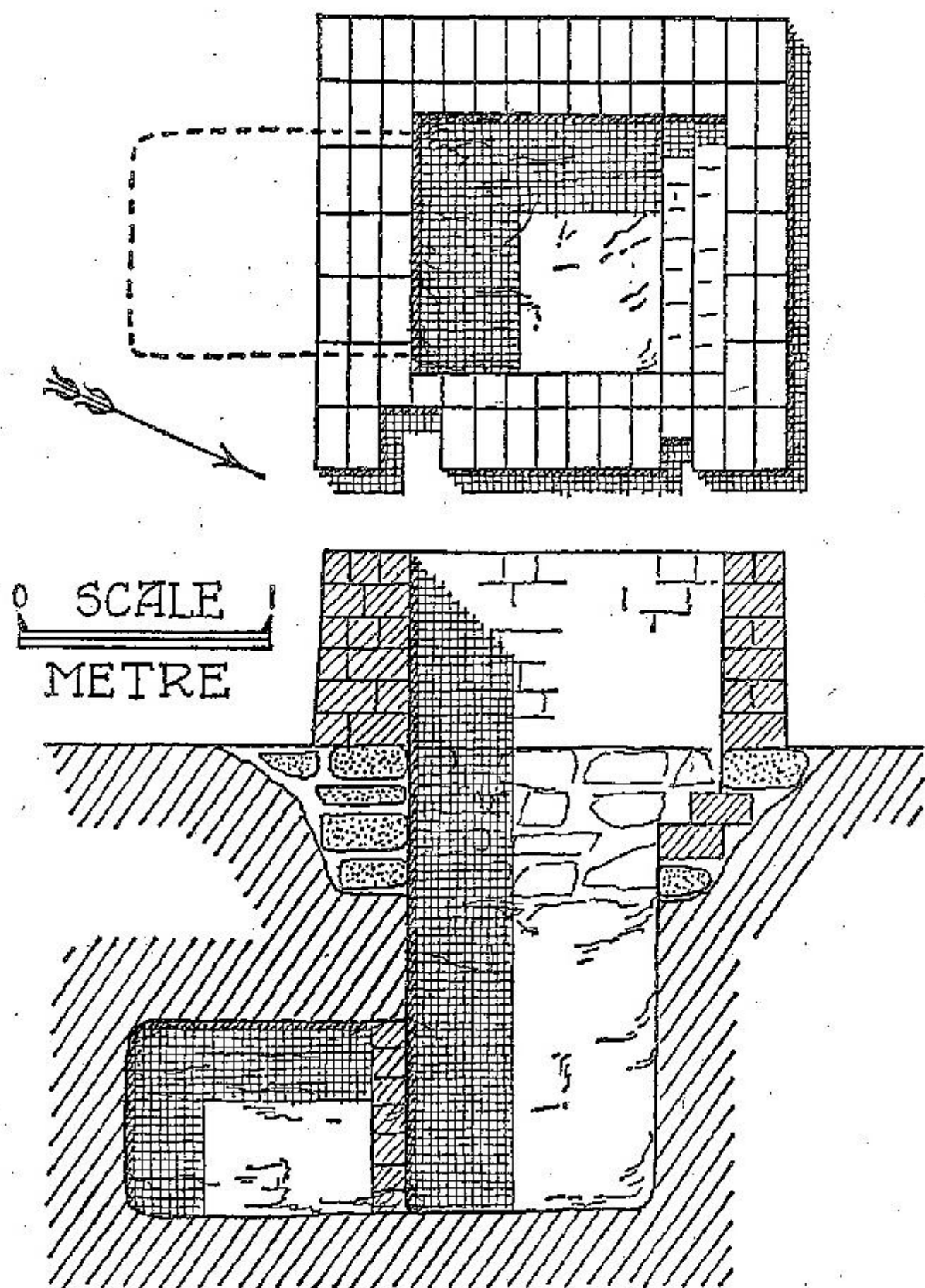


Fig. 97. Plan and section of a poor-class tomb of the late Second Dynasty



constructed in an open-worked pit. The difference in architectural conception is so radical, however, that one is tempted to see in these strange buildings some connexion with the adoption of Set worship by Perabsen and its apparent toleration under Kha-sekhemui.

The tombs of the lesser nobility follow the same design but with very few exceptions there are no magazines on each side of the entrance stairway and the 'house' usually has only a hall and two rooms, one of which, on the west, is the burial chamber.

At the close of the dynasty we find at Sakkara, for the first time, very small shaft tombs with what might be called dummy stairways, of which Fig. 97 is a typical example. These small tombs must belong to the poorer classes and are the first definite sign that the mass of the population were at last adopting the burial customs of their superiors. The contents of such tombs show the poverty of their owners, for although the bodies are wrapped in coarse linen, they are usually uncoffined and carry no possessions with them beyond two pottery vessels for food and drink.

Although the preservation of the bodies of the dead was considered essential, the Egyptian of the Archaic Period had not discovered the methods of his descendants in the art of true mummification. Nevertheless he did his best to retard natural decay and at least to preserve the appearance of the living person on the actual bony structure. During the First Dynasty, we know that the body was thickly swathed in linen, but it is only in burials of the Second Dynasty that we find certain evidence of the first tentative steps towards true mummification. This consisted of reproducing the appearance of the dead person by moulding the linen bandages in such a way that the face, torso, and limbs preserve the life shape after the actual body has decayed and shrunk over the skeleton. This was apparently achieved by soaking the linen

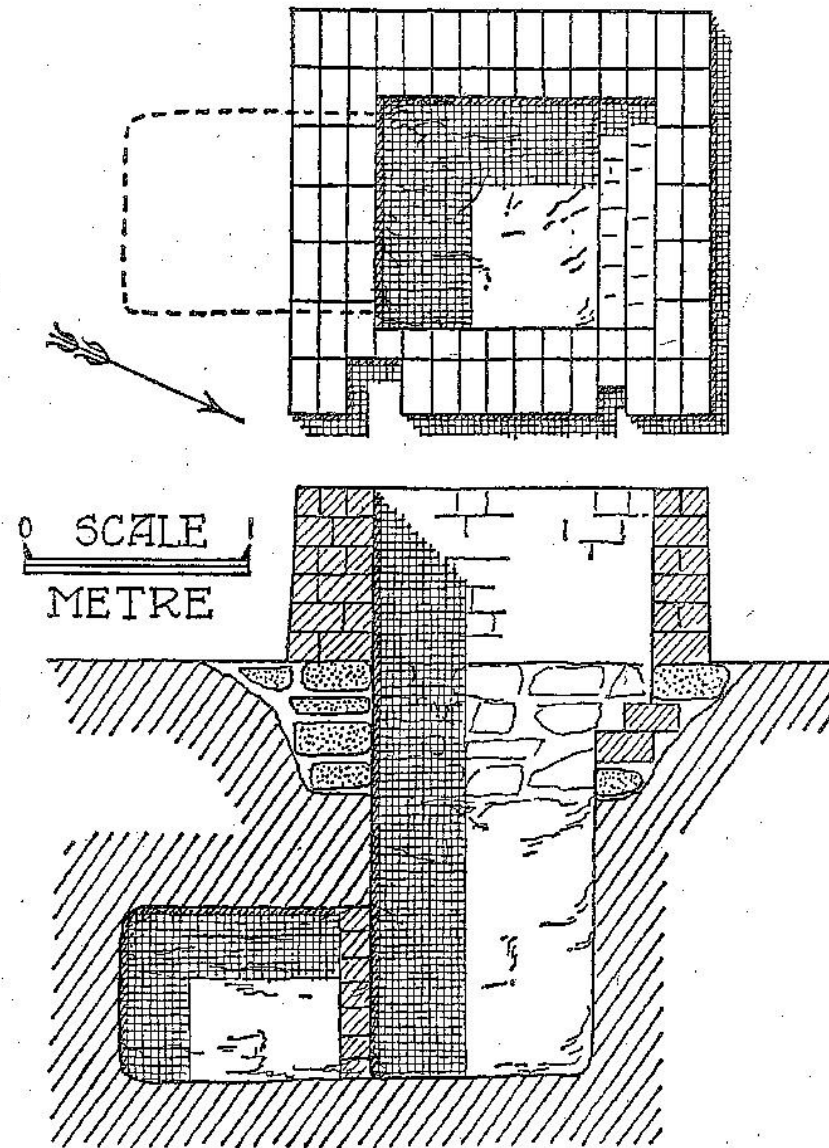


Fig. 97. Plan and section of a poor-class tomb of the late Second Dynasty

in some gummy material and so successful were the results that such 'mummies' of the Second Dynasty have an almost uncanny appearance of life (Pl. 25a). The features of the deceased are modelled in detail, as are the genital parts, and in the case of women the breasts and nipples are shown in perfect form. Such bodies are not laid in an extended position with the limbs concealed, like the mummy of later times, but are placed in a contracted posture with the arms and legs, and even the fingers, separated, bandaged, and modelled in life-like form.

## *Chapter 5*

### ART

As in architecture, sculpture, painting, and decorative design underwent a radical change with the advent of the dynastic race. A new art came to Egypt, and although many authorities see in it an unbroken development from that of the predynastic age, as exemplified in the white-line drawings on pottery, I think there is overwhelming evidence of the incursion into the Nile valley, in the period immediately prior to the Unification, of something entirely new.

#### SCULPTURE IN RELIEF

For the first time we see an art which is the undoubted forerunner of that of Pharaonic Egypt – conceptions in sculpture and decorative design which were to endure for more than 3000 years. Connecting links with the art of the Predynastic period undoubtedly existed and in its new environment it is not surprising that the artist adopted certain characteristics from the work of his predecessors; but in all essentials it was the product of a new civilization. This new art undoubtedly owed much to Mesopotamian influence, the evidence of which has been listed by the late Dr Henri Frankfort as follows: 1. Composite animals, especially winged griffins and serpent-necked felines, on palettes and knife-handles; 2. Group of hero dominating two lions; 3. Pairs of entwined animals on knife-handles and the Narmer palette. But this Mesopotamian influence, direct or indirect, was only transitory; after the Unification it disappeared and the pure conventions of